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Dungeon®

ADVENTURES FOR TSR ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

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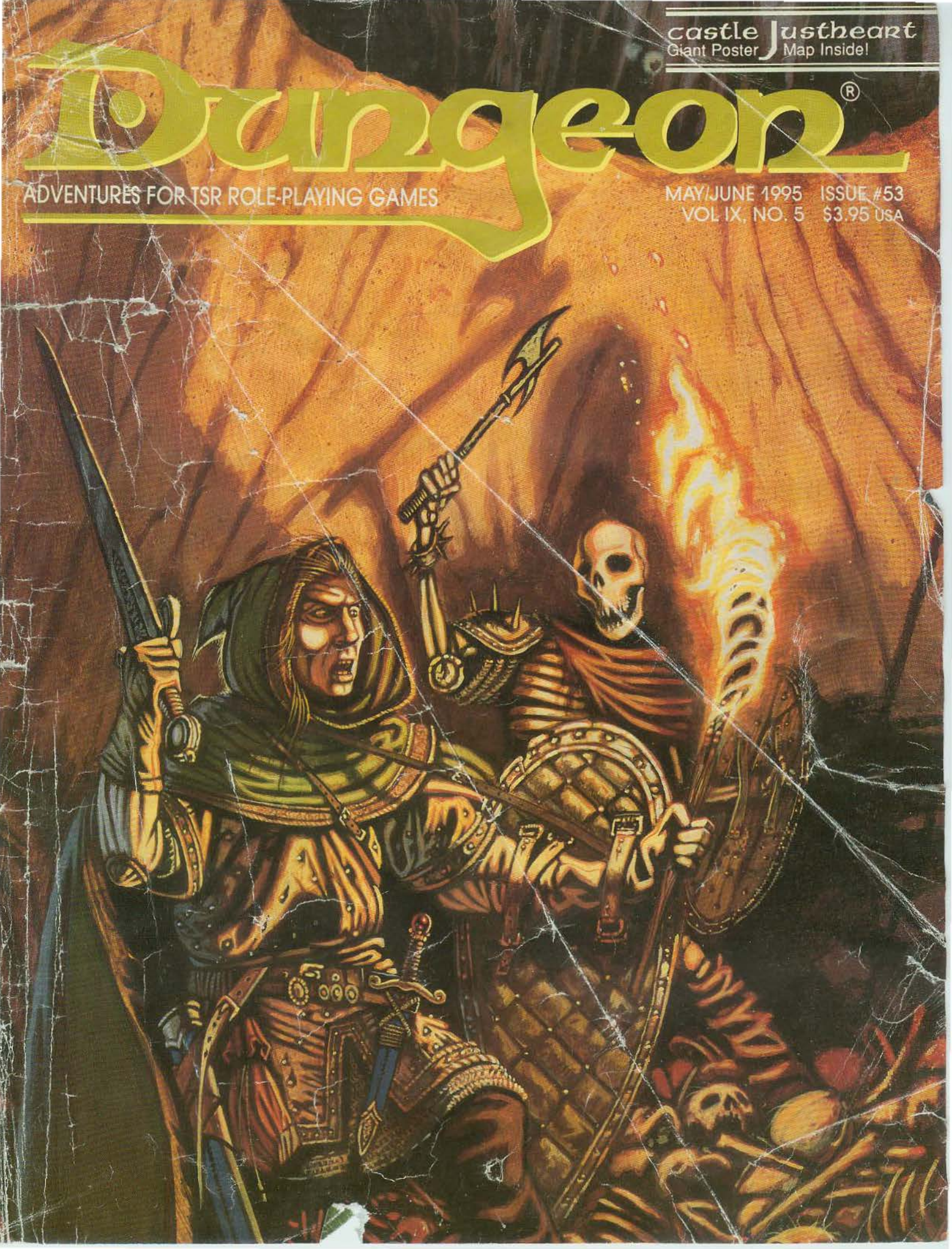

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ADVENTURES FOR TSR ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

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COVER: An adventurer discovers the pitfalls of exploring old tombs in this scene rendered by William O'Connor from "Clarshh's Sepulchre."

Twenty Appearances and Counting

This guest editorial is written for my 20th module appearance in DUNGEON® Adventures. "Clarshh's Sepulchre" was written with this magazine in mind, but it grew into something more by being shared with friends over several winter evenings. New players groped their way through their first-time game and fears of "getting it wrong." They survived (as did their characters) and the module went on to be accepted for publication.

New role-players are not the only ones to worry about getting it wrong. Every writer must start somewhere, putting ideas on paper, packaging them up, and sending them off into the great unknown. I was lucky to discover the editors at DUNGEON Adventures, who put me right on my most glaring errors, suggested changes to improve my approach, and ultimately accepted my first paid-for submission, back in 1986.

Not every module makes the grade. One that plays well at home won't always interest a wider audience. The last time I checked, six works out of every ten of mine were rejected, giving the lie to the idea of favouritism, or that DUNGEON Magazine will only publish a tiny band of writers.

The moral is that everybody, even a stranger 5,000 miles away, is treated the same. If you have a reasonable flair with the written word, you'll be encouraged, and advised, not excluded. Nothing ever diminishes the satisfaction of knowing that hundreds (*Well, thousands, actually—Wolfgang*) will read your ideas. So write now for guidelines, and share your adventures.

Willie Walsh

Willie Walsh
Dublin, Republic of Ireland

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All that is gold does not glitter,
not all those who wander are lost.
J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings.*

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SPELLBOOK MASQUERADE

BY J. LEE CUNNINGHAM

Evil wears many masks

Artwork by Terry Dykstra

Lee writes: *"After four years and six revisions, this adventure has finally come into its own. I'm sure fans of Samuel Taylor Coleridge will then understand just why I nicknamed this adventure "The Albatross," for at times it seemed that the whole affair would never see print. I'm sure readers of Coleridge will also understand if I take a moment to thank those who stood by me through the darkest of doldrums.*

Thanks to my cousin Chris, Nancy Finocchiaro, Debra, Monica, Dr. J. Gerlach, and especially Barbara Young and Wolfgang Baur for allowing me to resubmit till I finally got it right."

"Spellbook Masquerade" is an AD&D® adventure for one DM and one player, involving a single wizard of 3rd-5th level in the reacquisition of a misplaced *tome of lich creation*. This adventure should be played only with a good PC, for the tome may be too great a temptation for an evil PC. Also, because this adventure requires the PC to be both thief and hero, he should have a broad assortment of spells. As in all solo adventures, ideally the PC should have both magical protection (a magical ring or a cloak) and a source of magical healing, such as a potion of *healing*.

This adventure contains a unique and dangerous magical item, a *tome of lich creation*, so it is strongly recommended that the DM read the description of the tome before running this scenario. If the DM feels this particular magical item might destroy the balance of his campaign, he may substitute one of the evil tomes mentioned in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*. The tome created for this adventure adds a new twist to this scenario and involves a fairly low level PC in the prevention of a great evil.

Adventure Background

Vester Burford first came to the tiny hamlet of Brannon 70 years ago. Patrons at Gurney's Tavern still discuss how strange it was that a book merchant chose a village so remote and devoid of trade for his place of business. At the time, boasting little of value except a few farms and an occasional stray dog, Brannon was hardly worth the ink used to note its position on a cartographer's map. However, Brannon's condition soon changed after the Kincaids, holders of the largest farm in Brannon, discovered that their crop of barley and wheat was pre-

cisely what was required to build a brewing dynasty. This new industry not only breathed life into Brannon but also brought new trade to Burford's business as well.

Today marks the 69th anniversary of the Kincaid brewing company, and a masquerade ball is being held at Kincaid Keep to celebrate the occasion. This grand ball has always been Kelsey Kincaid's way of telling the world just how rich and powerful she has become. The masquerade is, at the very least, an exercise in decadence. Because their livelihood depends on Kincaid Brewing, many of Brannon's prominent citizens feel obligated to attend and contribute financially to the ball's continued success. The fact that Kelsey took over the family business ten years ago when her whole family died quite suddenly of a rare, stomach illness might also have something to do with the Brannonese zeal for this annual masquerade. Moreover, tavern patrons have noted that Kelsey's opposition in the brewing trade often meets with a similar end. Suspicion always seems to fall on Kelsey, but legal redress is never successful for lack of evidence.

Burford has been invited to the ball, but at the moment he is more concerned with the reacquisition of a *tome of lich creation*, an item he has kept hidden from evil most of his adult life. It seems that the old book merchant's eyesight is failing, because while he was taking his yearly inventory, Burford accidently shipped the tome off to Kelsey. Mistress Kelsey is reputed to be a sorceress and always takes advantage of Burford's yearly inventory sale. However, Burford's *ring of know alignment* (10 charges) has given him plenty of warning about Kelsey's dark personality, so he sells her only the most basic tomes and scrolls. Burford views this as a way to appease Kelsey's scholastic appetites while keeping her power in check. In fact, Burford has kept his best stock secret from Kelsey for years, but unless he can retrieve the missing tome, that will change forever.

Now, if he were 30 years younger and not riddled with arthritis, Burford would use the cover of the masquerade to search Kelsey's keep and recover the tome. He is confident that Kelsey hasn't had a chance to peruse today's boxed shipment because of preparations for the ball. What Burford needs is someone to take his place at the masquerade and substitute an ogre cookbook for the lich tome, before Kelsey discovers it. Burford is willing to offer a 3rd-level spell book worth 3,000 gp to the first likely candidate to enter his shop.

For the Player Character

Read or paraphrase the following to the player:

> You are told one of the most interesting shops in the village of Brannon is Burford's Rare Book Emporium. Sages and wizards alike praise it as a great source of scrolls, rare tomes, and other lexicons of the arcane arts. Although your purse is surely too light to purchase some of Burford's more exotic volumes, you suspect you can obtain a fair bargain, for today marks Burford's yearly inventory sale, when his excess merchandise is sold for far less than its usual price.
>
> However, as you eagerly enter the tiny shop, your heart sinks. The shop is hardly what you expected. Books and scrolls lie haphazardly tossed about the floor, as if the shop has recently been ransacked. A thin, bald man sits behind a counter with a grey tome clutched firmly in his two hands. He shakes his head dejectedly, crying, "What have I done? What have I done? That hairy white-faced ape has ruined me. It made me so nervous! I've doomed poor Brannon forever."
>
> The old man starts to say something else when he startles at your approach. His left hand goes quickly to his right as he whispers, "Know thee." After a moment, the old man seems to breath easier and eagerly beckons you to come forth, saying: "Come closer, my friend. Come closer and experience the bargain of a lifetime, for I, Vester Burford, have need of your services."

Burford is 93 years old and suffering from severe arthritis. He knows he doesn't have many years left, but in that time he desperately wants to see the lich tome destroyed. In fact, he believes he has finally found the right method and was preparing to send the tome to someone who could accomplish the task when he accidentally shipped it to Kelsey.

Vester Burford: AL LG; AC 10; M3; MV 9; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 8, D 10, C 8, I 17, W 13, Ch 14; ML 12; dagger, *ring of know alignment* (10 charges). Spells: *magic missile, shield; levitate.*

Assuming the PC passes the ring's scruntiny, allow him to introduce himself and ask Burford some questions. The DM may condense Burford's reply below or read it directly to the PC. In any event, the following passage should answer most of the PC's questions.

> "So many questions, my friend. Let me gather my thoughts and answers will be forthcoming. Please let this old fool start at the beginning before he makes a mess of anything else."
>
> As you draw closer, the book merchant scans the shop cautiously and whispers, "You see, my friend, in my youth I acquired a tome so vile, so evil, that I decided to never rest until I found a way to destroy it. This tome is a volume which, through various elixirs and rituals, permits a spellcaster to transform himself into one of the most horrific creatures known to mankind . . . No, no, I've said too much already. All you really need know about the tome is that it must not fall into the wrong hands."
>
> As these words leave Burford's lips, a clattering sounds rings through a nearby window. You both stare breathlessly at one another, not daring to move, until a black cat suddenly leaps onto the windowsill. The cat cries mournfully as Burford again moves his left hand to his right, whispering, "Know thee." Standing so close to Burford you can just barely hear a small chime ringing out from the silver ring on his right hand. Burford breaths a sigh of relief and resumes his tale.
>
> "Forgive me, my friend, but I seem to be a little jumpy. This ring provides me with the ability to know what's in a creature's heart." Smiling at the ring, Burford chuckles, "In fact, were it not for this ring, we would not be speaking now."
>
> Burford pulls a velvet handkerchief from his tunic and wipes his sweaty forehead muttering, "Let's see. Where was I? Ah yes, the tome. I have kept the tome out of the grasp of evil for 70 odd years, but today I was careless and mistook it for this cookbook." Emphasizing the point, Burford picks up a gray book entitled *One Hundred Recipes for a Hungry Ogre.* "You see, my friend, with these old eyes,

the tome and this cookbook look much alike, and my shelf-clearing is always a hectic time.

The book merchant shakes his head, adding, "I should have retired long ago, but I wanted to learn how to destroy the tome, and now that I'm on the brink of that discovery, all is lost." Burford trembles slightly as his eyes once again meet your gaze. "You see, my friend, I have inadvertently placed one of the most evil books imaginable in the hands of an equally vile person, for I accidently sent the tome off with the rest of Kelsey Kincaid's shipment earlier today. I don't think she's had time to discover my mistake, but when she does, Brannon will wilt under her lust for power."

Watching Burford wipe his forehead again, you think he might collapse into hysterics, but he gathers his composure and says firmly, "Well, that's my plight in a nutshell, and what I propose is simply this: I want you to attend Kelsey's masquerade, find the tome, and replace it with this cookbook. If you agree, I can provide you with a costume and an invitation signed by Kelsey herself. In exchange for the tome, I will give you a spellbook with at least two spells of the third plateau. What say you, my friend?"

If the PC refuses to recover the tome, Burford accepts the PC's decision, stating that the whole affair was entirely his own fault. He thanks the PC for his time and rejects any offers to purchase the spellbook. The adventure is effectively over. Afterward, Burford will attempt to rectify his error but fail miserably. Kelsey's own success or failure in lich transformation is up to the DM.

If the PC agrees to Burford's terms, the bookseller tells him everything he knows about Kelsey, including the information in the adventure background. Burford knows a few secrets:

- His *ring of know alignment* tells him that Kelsey is not only chaotic but also evil.
- Although she has never been directly linked to the deaths of her family and business rivals, Burford believes she poisoned them by mutating the healing remedies contained in a volume he once sold her.
- Fearing for his life if he turned Kelsey away from his shop, Burford tells you that he sold her only items that would keep him free of her scorn, not items that would increase her power. However, before the poisoning incident, he did sell her scrolls containing the following spells: *shield, pyrotechnics, magic missile, Melf's acid arrow,* and *knock.*
- One of Kelsey's greatest treasures is her pet albino ape, Orchid. This creature is very intelligent and related to a baboon. Burford isn't exactly sure what species it is, but he does know that it's very dangerous.
- Burford doesn't believe Kelsey has had time to discover his mistake, because her preparations for tonight's ball have probably taken too much of her time. Thus, the PC should find the tome in a package marked with Burford's seal (an open book with two crossed quills).

Burford hands the PC the invitation to the ball, which he says is the only means of admittance to the masquerade. He also gives the PC a harlequin suit, complete with mask, bells, and a jester's scepter. The costume is quite loose and will fit just about any size humanoid. The costume's scepter has a secret compartment perfect for smuggling a wand. Burford will wait for the PC at the shop, though he asks the PC to make sure he isn't followed from the ball.

If the PC asks to see the spellbook, Burford grabs one of the scattered books as he hastily places the rest back on the shelf. The book contains a *blink* spell and a *fireball* spell. However, it is not the PC's spellbook quite yet, so the PC has no way of knowing what spells it contains unless he casts a *read magic* spell. Under no circumstances will Burford let the PC borrow the spellbook to complete the adventure; however, he will allow a 5th-level wizard to memorize a needed spell.

Once the PC is satisfied with the spellbook and terms of the agreement, Burford hands the PC the harlequin costume and the invitation. He reminds the PC that the tome must be found before midnight, for this is the hour when the guests remove their masks. If the PC is still present at midnight, he will be quite literally exposed. Burford offers one last word of warning to the PC; he cautions that the tome must remain unread as the result could be "unfortunate."

Keeping track of time is an important element of this adventure. If the PC decides to take up the quest, he will arrive at the ball at precisely seven o'clock in the evening. Although he may find the tome after midnight, his best chance of success will be while he is draped in his costume.

In the few hours the adventurer has before the masquerade starts, he may wish to gather information in the town. Roll 1d8 to determine the number of rumors the PC hears, then choose from the list below:

1. Burford's shop contains many evil tomes. (False)
2. Burford is a powerful wizard. (False)
3. Kelsey is a powerful sorceress. (False)
4. Kelsey is an astrologer, and her keep contains a secret observatory. (True)
5. Burford is in business with Kelsey. (False)
6. Kelsey was once engaged to a young noble, but her betrothed died unexpectedly. (True)
7. A section of the keep has been blocked off. (True)
8. Many of Kelsey's competitors have died of strange illnesses. (True)
9. Kelsey controls a powerful werewolf. (False)

For the Dungeon Master

The DM may wish to tell the player certain background information before the start of this adventure. However, the DM should keep certain facts about Kelsey from the PC. The information in this section should become available to the PC only during the course of the adventure. The DM should also keep the *tome of lich creation*'s function as much of a mystery as possible.

Tome of Lich Creation

Burford's research has established that the tome is a minor artifact that crumbles after one use. Until its evil magic is used, nothing short of a *disintegration* spell can destroy it. However, just because the tome can be used only once doesn't make it harmless; it has the power to elevate a wizard into a lich. If the wizard survives a final saving throw, he becomes an 18th-level lich with full spellcasting ability, regardless of his previous level.

This transformation involves the creation of an unholy bath or vessel worth at least 10,000 gp. For six months, the lich-to-be must spend an hour a day bathing in elixirs and magical potions (the exact

alchemical ingredients are up to the DM's discretion). Finally, the subject must undergo an excruciating ritual that either infuses the power of the tome into the individual or destroys both the subject and the tome. The table below indicates the chance of a successful transformation.

Wizard's Level	Chance for success (%)
6th	10
7th	20
8th	30
9th	40
10th	50
11th	60
12th	70
13th	80
14th	90
15th +	95

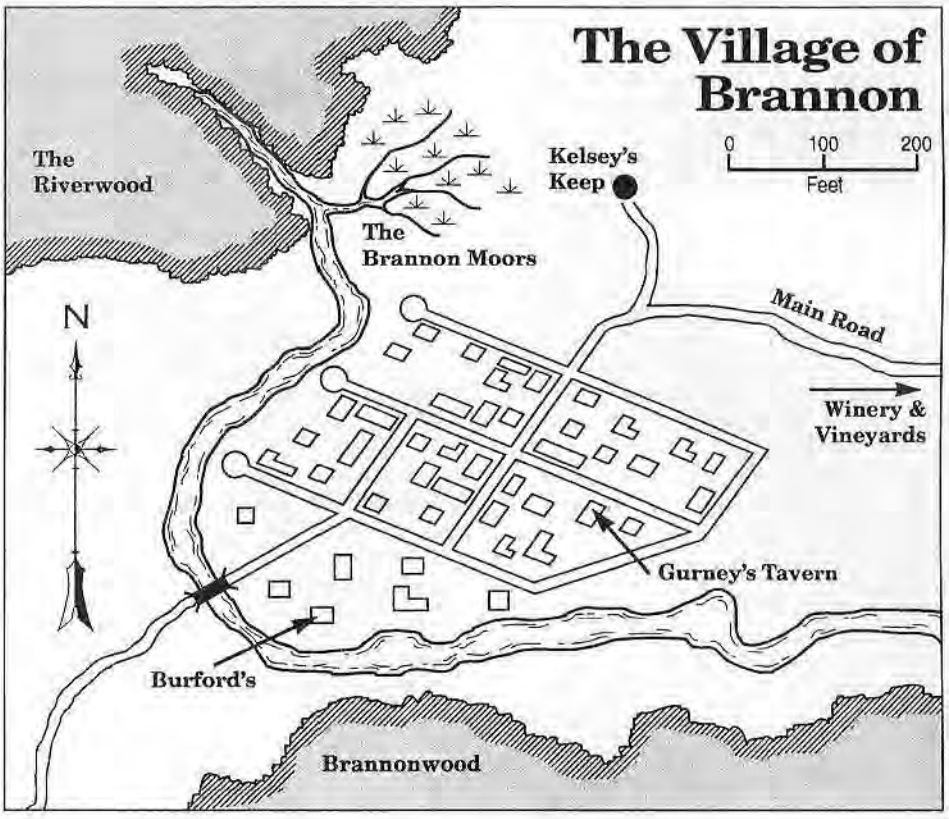
For an item of such power, the tome is remarkably drab: a greasy gray cover, poor binding, and a broken spine are its only outstanding features.

Kelsey Kincaid

From an early age, Kelsey knew she was her father's favorite, and she capitalized on every opportunity to let the other members of her family know it. She would spend hours with father, helping him make various decisions about the family business, thereby increasing the Kincaid holdings. Kelsey's talent for business was matched only by her great charm and beauty. She turned Kincaid Brewing from a medium-sized operation into a giant one. In fact, her ability was so extraordinary that her father promoted her above her two stepbrothers, calling her "My brilliant princess" and naming her the overseer of Kincaid Brewing.

However, Kelsey's brothers did not give up easily. They conspired with Kelsey's stepmother to ingratiate themselves with their father and steal the family business from Kelsey. It was their mother who came up with the idea. One evening she told her sons, "Yes, Kelsey is the oldest, but she is also of marrying age. I think it's time for our princess to have a husband . . . a far distant husband at that."

With a few well-placed words, the stepmother convinced Kelsey's father that his daughter should marry. To say that Kelsey was perturbed would be a gross understatement. She saw right through her stepmother's plan, and she refused to let her stepmother succeed.



Kelsey arranged a business trip for her father on precisely the same day she threw a dinner party for the rest of the family and her betrothed. Kelsey had spent months developing a poison that induced all the symptoms of a normal fever. While the dinner was being prepared, the three components of Kelsey's deadly poison were mixed with the beef, the wine, and the desert. All Kelsey needed to do was to serve the meal and avoid eating the last course, and since Kelsey never ate dessert, her plan seemed flawless.

The dinner was served, and Kelsey was in her glory, watching both her family and her fiance greedily helping themselves to the plate of death she had set before them. She smiled contently as each dinner guest complimented her on the meal. Then Kelsey's world came crashing down. The front door swung open, and Kelsey heard her father's footsteps. He had arrived home early, and he promptly sat down to dinner saying, "I bet you thought I'd miss my little princess's dinner party. Well, not likely."

Kelsey watched in horror as her father ate his last meal. She nonchalantly tried to stop her father from eating all three of the deadly courses, but the doting old man would not hear of it. Kelsey excused herself and retired to her room to search for a way to neutralize the poison. She knew it was a futile effort, for she had deliberately chosen a poison that had no antidote. To make matters worse, Kelsey had coordinated the night of the poisoning with the local cleric's annual pilgrimage to a distant temple. Kelsey had no recourse but to hold her father's hand as the poison did its work.

Her family's death took several days, their cries filling the night, but Kelsey never left her father's side. Later, after her poison had run its course, Kelsey dismissed the servants and sent her fiance's body back to his family with her condolences. Alone, Kelsey mummified her family and entombed them in the upper dining room, sealing their rooms for good measure. Since that night, Kelsey has lived in her father's room.

Today Kelsey stands as the supreme ruler over Brannon and its brewing industry. She has strived to honor her father's memory by eliminating all opposition and increasing Kincaid Brewing's influence throughout the region, and she has been so successful that few tap-

rooms go without a supply of Kincaid ale. She has accomplished much of this through a vast knowledge of poisons and a limited array of magic. To further her goals, Kelsey wants to become one of the greatest sorceresses of all time.

Most people find Kelsey's desire to make her dead father proud a little odd. Of course, most people are not aware of the sad truth that Kelsey, from time to time, still believes her father is alive. When such a mood strikes Kelsey, she retreats to the upstairs dining room to speak with her father and scold the rest of her family. She has placed the corpses of her family as they were murdered, at the dining room table. Moreover, excitement seems to bring on Kelsey's delusion, so she is likely to visit her father sometime during the ball. This may pose a problem for the PC, because the object of his quest lies upstairs.

Kelsey Kincaid: AL CE; AC 7; MV 12; M5; hp 19; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; ML 14; S 7, D 16, C 17, I 15, W 13, Ch 18; XP 3,000; stiletto, poisoned comb (save or death in 2-8 melee rounds). Spells: *affect normal fires, dancing lights, enlarge, shield; pyrotechnics* (×2); *Melf's minute meteors*. In addition to these spells Kelsey's spellbook also contains *read magic, knock, light,* and *magic missile*. She always wears a emerald *ring of protection +1*, a gift from her father.

Kelsey has spent many years increasing her tolerance for most poisons, so she gains a +4 to her saving throw vs. poison. She always wears a silver comb in her hair, not for looks so much as for defense—the comb is tipped with a deadly poison. Kelsey's tolerance makes her immune to the comb's poison, and she uses it only in the direst of circumstances. Her favorite battle tactic is to cast an *enlarge* spell on Orchid, her pet banderlog, and attack with other spells while Orchid rends the opponent apart.

Kelsey has chosen a stunning low-cut black dress for tonight's masquerade. She has accentuated this glamorous costume with a lovely gold crown (worth 2,500 gp). Kelsey sees no reason to dress up like a fool; such buffoonery is reserved for her guests. She merely wears the garments she sees as her due: the trappings of a princess.

The Party

Although this scenario includes a timeline and set encounters in various rooms, the adventure also affords the DM a great deal of leeway in establishing the pace of the masquerade's events. The timeline should be used as a guide, not as the deciding word on what takes place. For instance, the DM should allow the PC to investigate the keep freely without being forced toward certain areas where the timeline dictates an event occurs. If the DM adheres to this less rigid style of play, the adventure will take on a more realistic feel.

The masquerade's guests number only 43, because Kelsey prefers to keep this annual event somewhat exclusive. The DM may flesh out the ball with as few or many NPCs as he sees fit; the only requirements for such NPCs are that they be in costume and zero-level. A list of a several NPCs the adventurer may encounter is provided in the ballroom description (see area 3 below). Although this list does not include this adventure's more important NPCs, the DM will find those NPCs spaced throughout the module in set encounters. For instance, Orchid is always found guarding Kelsey's lab, and the thief Roscoe Slythe is found in the music room stealing Kelsey's violin.

The PC need not concern himself with the masquerade's guests. However, there is a 10% chance that the adventurer will encounter Kelsey each turn he remains upstairs. The chance increases to 20% if Kelsey has already caught the PC sneaking around downstairs. If the PC is upstairs during one of Kelsey's visits to her father, the chance rises to 40%.

The last items for the DM to consider are the fabric and bells of the jester costume. Unless the adventurer has a way to muffle the bells, he will negate any chance for stealthy movement. In game terms, allow a 2-in-6 chance of stealthy movement while the PC wears the costume as it was given to him. If the PC cuts the bells off the costume, Kelsey has a 20% chance to notice this alteration and become suspicious (chances to encounter Kelsey thereafter double). Also, certain spells designed for stealth don't cover everything. For example, an *invisibility* spell does not hide sound or muddy footprints.

Time Line

7:00 P.M. The PC arrives at the ball.

7:30 P.M. Kelsey goes upstairs to visit her father.

7:40 P.M. Kelsey returns downstairs.

8:30 P.M. The buffet opens.

9:00 P.M. Slythe cases the music room.

9:30 P.M. Kelsey announces the semi-finalist in tonight's contest for the best costume. They are the buccaneer (Jarboe), jester (PC), and hill giant (Doodys).

9:40 P.M. Kelsey goes upstairs to discuss the ball with her father. The Doody brothers seek out the PC.

9:50 P.M. Kelsey goes back downstairs.

10:00 P.M. Kelsey announces there will be a brief display of magic at 11:00.

11:00 P.M. Kelsey casts *pyrotechnics, dancing lights, affect normal fires,* and *Melf's minute meteors* spells targeted on a small dove. The guests are impressed with the fireworks, but some complain about the cruelty to the bird.

11:10 P.M. The fireworks are over, and Kelsey announces that the winner for tonight's contest will be chosen at 12:00. The prize is 50 gp.

12:00 P.M. If the PC is present, he wins the contest and is asked to the dais.

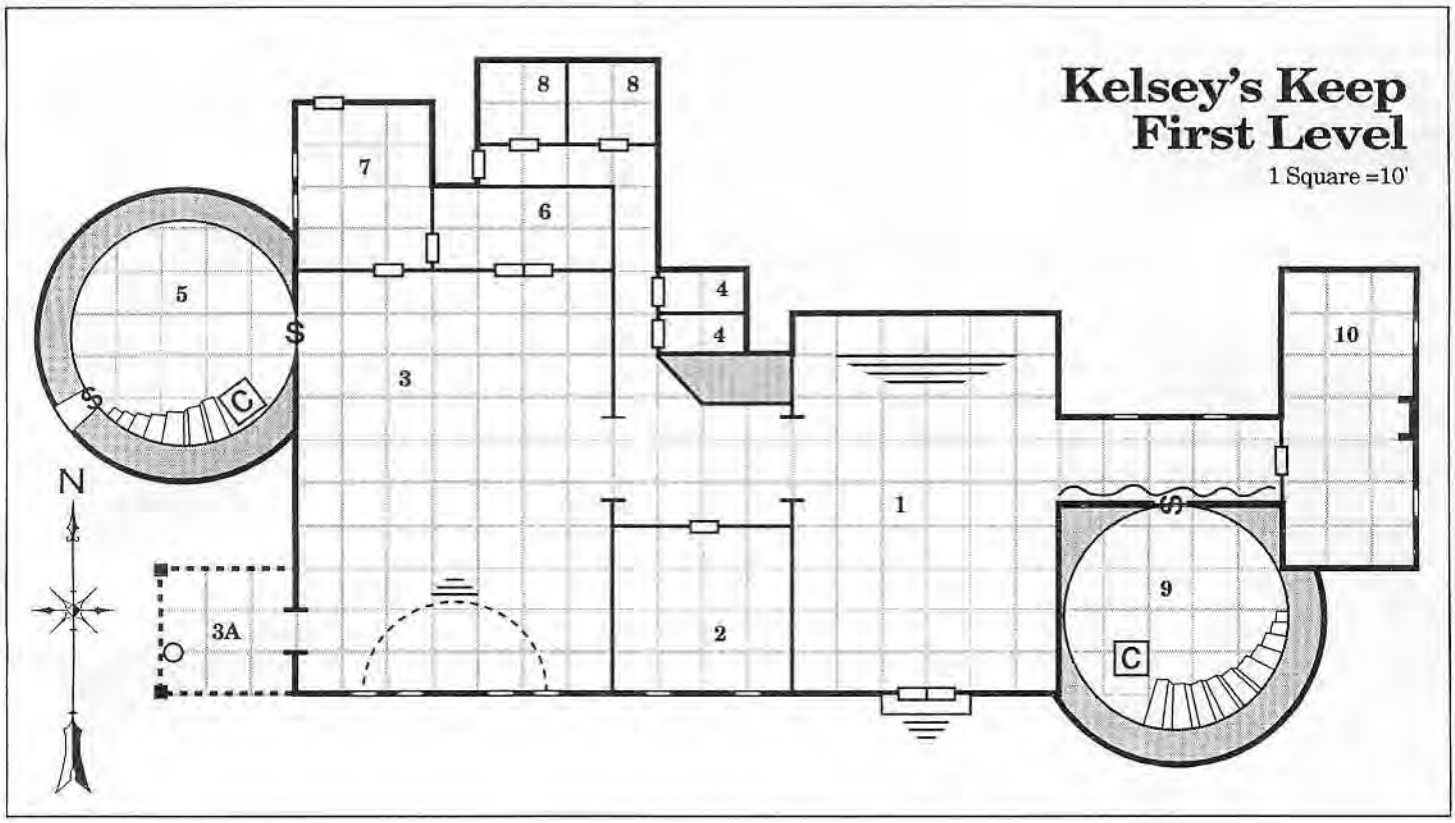
12:05 P.M. The unmasking.

The Keep and Masquerade

Although it is raining slightly, the PC reaches the keep's front door without incident. Since Kelsey's keep is just on the edge of town, there's no need to bring a mount. However, if the PC insists on doing so, tell the player that all guests stable their mounts at the town's livery. Kelsey's stables are too small to accommodate all her guests' mounts.

1. The Foyer. Read or paraphrase the following to the PC:

> Knocking on a pair of oaken doors soon brings two cheery serving girls to the doorstep.
>
> "Welcome," says one. "May I take your coat?" Without waiting for a reply, the girls—dressed as slyphs—flutter about you and brush stray droplets of rain from your dripping garments.
>
> After a few moments of this sprucing up, another servant adds, "The other guests are in the ballroom to your left. Just follow the music."
>
> You step into the marble hall and marvel at the full splendor of Kincaid Keep. This great hall boasts a crystal chandelier as its centerpiece. Directly beneath the chandelier, the Kincaid family crest is emblazoned in the center of the marble floor. This



crest, a large keg crossed with two broad swords, draws your eye deeper into the hall, until your gaze comes to rest on a huge set of marble stairs that sweep up to the second floor.

"Sir, you don't want to be late for the grand ball," says one of the servant girls. Her bell-like voice pulls you away from your admiration of the hall's trappings. Looking you over, she adds, "Yes, you wouldn't want to be late with such a wonderful costume."

The girl pauses for a moment and points to coats and other gear hanging on a row of hooks. She smiles once more, adding, "Oh, and don't worry about your things. They'll be safe here."

Before you can question the servants about the other guests, a knock at the front door turns their attention to the masquerade's next arrival. While one servant moves to the door, the other again offers to take your things.

Although the servants will not insist that the PC leave his possessions with them, they do suggest it before they greet the next guest. If the PC doesn't follow their advice, the servants simply shrug their shoulders and answer the door. At the ball, the PC garners a few stares, but none are threatening. However, if the PC encounters Kelsey in the ballroom, he must do some fast talking to explain his odd behavior. Kelsey is habitually curious about her guests and their actions.

The rest of this hall contains little of interest. The stairs that lead to the second floor and Kelsey's chambers are the most intriguing feature. Anyone hoping to sneak up the stairs runs a 50% chance of being seen by one of the servants. If the PC is spotted, he will be informed that no one may go upstairs without Mistress Kelsey's permission. The girls stop greeting guests for the evening at 8:30 P.M., which gives the PC a chance to reach the second floor.

Several capes and other garments hang on the hooks lining the entrance hall. Although many are very attractive, none are extraordinarily expensive. All garments placed here are safe until the end of the masquerade.

2. The Music Room.

A red shag carpet covers this spacious chamber, which is obviously a recital room. Thick tapestries, displaying scenes of minstrels blanket the walls serenading beautiful women and winning over ecstatic crowds, blanket the walls. A golden harpsichord rests in the southwest corner among a circle of leather armchairs.

However, what catches your attention is a ghoulish figure looming over an elegant violin. This figure appears to be securing the instrument in a burlap sack tied at his waist.

Roscoe has been hired by Anna Lane to steal a valuable violin that once belonged to her family. Slythe is a good thief, but he is no hero. If he is hard-pressed, he will flee rather than fight.

Roscoe Slythe (ghoul costume): AL CE; AC 7; T2; hp 10; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 9, D 17, C 9, I 12, W 10, Ch 15; OL 40, F/RT 25, CW 70, MS 45, HS 25, PP 35, DN 15; XP 200; dagger.

The finely crafted violin is worth 1,000 gp. Sythe's first action is to throw

his dagger at the PC to buy enough time to escape out the room's southern windows. If the PC thwarts Sythe's theft and captures the thief, Kelsey will reward the PC with a ruby worth 300 gp. Kelsey orders Slythe taken into custody, and he will be questioned in the morning. However, if the PC lets Sythe escape, nothing drastic will occur. Kelsey will not discover the theft until the following morning.

3. The Ballroom.

> The marble floor of this gigantic room is dotted with dancing couples, all keeping pace with the minstrels' song while trying to keep their ill-fitting costumes in one piece.
>
> An array of uniquely garbed guests lines the benches along the walls. To your right a man with a dark cape, protruding fangs, and pale skin apes the stereotypical vampire. A rotund guest in a bear outfit listens intently to his every word. To your left, a rather comical hill giant (obviously a two-person costume) struggles to keep its footing.
>
> Stepping out of the way of a waltzing couple, you notice a large patio just beyond the double doors at the southwest corner of the bustling ballroom. This patio is a tap area, and a small crowd gleefully awaits the tapping of another keg.
>
> At the moment, several dancers are encouraging the minstrels on the southern platform to pick up the beat. "Give us something we can kick our heels up to, good minstrels," says a little fellow dressed in a leprechaun outfit. With this request, the musicians pick up the tempo, and the whole room joins hands and begins moving about in a wild chain dance.

If the PC wishes to stand back and take everything in, he can avoid the chain dance with a successful Dexterity ability check; otherwise, he is pulled in. Choose the two guests flanking the PC at random from those described below.

Naturally, if the PC entered the ballroom *invisibly*, he will not become part of the chain dance. However, whether the PC is visible or not, once the dance is over he will spot a beautiful dark-haired woman near the ballroom's fireplace. The woman is Kelsey, dressed in regal garb, sporting a golden crown and an elegant low-cut dress.

As Burford speculated, the preparations for tonight's ball have been too involved to give Kelsey a chance to peruse her book shipment. At the moment, Kelsey is most concerned with the quality of the music, which seemed substandard until the most recent number. For the next few minutes Kelsey mingles with her guests, making sure everyone is having a good time.

The guests include several of the adventure's key NPCs; gauge their actions accordingly if the PC strikes up a conversation with any of them. The most amusing secondary NPCs include Anna Lane, Victoria Brace, Captain Collinsworth Jarboe, and Tom and Ralph Doody. These NPCs might well follow the PC around for a while. The important NPCs who might be present include Kelsey, Vlad Graves, and Roscoe Slythe. These NPCs will be encounted in set areas.

Anna is trying to upstage Kelsey by outranking her in costume. She discovered what Kelsey's costume would be from a servant. Anna knows this will upset Kelsey, but she doesn't care because her family has been ruined by Kincaid brewing. Anna has also brought along 100 gp that she will pay to any guest willing to "accidently" spill punch on Kelsey's dress. Anyone doing so will be quickly ushered from the party.

Anna Lane (queen costume): AL CG; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level NPC; hp 2; THAC0 20; Dmg nil; ML 8; S 8, D 11, C 14, I 10, W 9, Ch 10.

Tom and Ralph Doody are twins who took second place in last year's costume contest and are determined to win this year. They spend the evening bullying other finalists into dropping out of the contest. Each twin carries a blackjack under his costume (1-3 hp damage).

The Doody Twins (hill giant costume): AL CN; AC 8; MV 12 (6 in costume); F1; hp 7 each; THAC0 20; Dmg by weapon type; ML 11; S 15, D 10, C 13, I 9, W 10, Ch 13.

Victoria is a busybody and a gossip; she thinks she knows everything and everyone. When confronted she will continually try to guess the PC's identity.

Victoria Brace (bear costume): AL LN; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level NPC; hp 2; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg nil; S 7, D 8, C 9, I 13, W 10, Ch 8.

Captain Jarboe is a harmless but annoying old lech. He'll try to play matchmaker between a male PC and Victoria Brace, and he will throw himself at a female PC. Jarboe's only goal is to dance with as many ladies as possible while avoiding any discussion of business.

Captain Collinsworth Jarboe (swashbuckler costume) AL CG; AC 4; F3; hp 17; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 15, D 17, C 9, I 11, W 14, Ch 16; ML 14; rapier and studded leather.

3a. The Tap Area. A stout dwarf by the name of Tapper casually fills orders. Tapper (0-level hill dwarf; AC 0; hp 3) serves as the keep's smith when he isn't helping at the ball. He has a secret appetite for Gurney's house ale—unobtainable in Kelsey's keep—and spends many evenings carousing at Gurney's Tavern. On more than one occasion, Tapper has returned from the pub to find candlelight spilling out between the cracks of the boarded windows on the keep's second floor. Tapper knows that area served as the Kincaid family quarters, before Kelsey had it sealed. Tapper believes something strange is afoot in this wing of the keep, perhaps Kelsey is working dark magic. He will share this speculation with anyone who cares to tip him a few gold pieces. (The candlelight actually illuminates Kelsey's conversations with her father, not some dark spellcasting as Tapper suspects.) If the PC doesn't talk to Tapper, he may encounter Jarboe here; Jarboe will certainly ask a female PC to dance with him.

4. The Privy. This large privy has been divided into two sections, and a line has formed three deep for each gender.

5. Laboratory Staircase. Kelsey can use these stairs as an escape route. Although she has never had to use it for that purpose, the secret staircase has helped perpetuate the myth of Kelsey's phenomenal powers. Her servants can recall several times when their mistress was seen entering the second floor's barred section, only to reenter the keep through the front door without having been seen leaving the second floor.

6. The Downstairs Dining Room. At 8:30 P.M. a huge roast boar, assorted meat pies, and other traditional fare is served in this room. Until then, the doors remain closed. The keep has a smaller, private dining room on the

second floor that the Kincaids once used for family discussions. Kelsey's father preferred to dine out, away from prying servant eyes. His wife served the family's meals after they were delivered via the dumbwaiter. The upstairs dining room, holding the corpses of Kelsey's family, has been sealed for years and should not be confused with this downstairs dining room.

7. The Kitchen. This room is off limits to all guests. The cook, Granny Breadwood (0-level human; AC 10; THAC0 20; hp 2), sees that this rule is enforced. She uses her broom to usher guests who ignore her initial warnings out into the ballroom. Granny's broom doesn't cause any damage, only an embarrassing situation for the PC. Whether he comes into conflict with Granny or follows her wishes, the PC will notice the dusty dumbwaiter that leads to the upper dining room.

8. The Servants' Quarters. These small identical chambers hold little of value, but they are a very good hiding place for anyone avoiding a search party. They remain unoccupied until the masquerade is finished; then the servants and Granny return to their chambers to rest after the evening's excitement.

9. The Observatory Stairs. Kelsey uses these secret stairs to enter and leave her room without the her servants' knowledge.

10. The Library.

> The room's furniture looks soft and comfortable, and much of it has been moved close to the hearth's light and warmth. When a log flares in the fireplace, you realize just how many books there are on the shelves, and how little time you have.
>
> Suddenly, a figure moves from behind a large reading chair in the southeast corner. His vampiric features send a chill through your heart until you realize that the man is in costume. He moves up from the chair, exclaiming, "A wonderful library, is it not?"

Vlad has been trying to find a way into Kelsey's keep for quite some time. He has heard rumors that the keep possesses a secret library, containing many arcane tomes. He believes that the masquerade will provide the perfect cover for his search. Vlad bought an invitation from a guest for 100 gp, and his heavy vampire makeup permits him to move freely among the other guests.

Vlad Graves (vampire costume): AL NE; AC 7; MV 12; W4; hp 11; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type and spell; S 12, D 16, C 10, I 15, W 12, Ch 11; XP 800; dagger, a *+1 ring of protection.* Spells: *detect magic, jump, magic missile; darkness 15' radius, knock.*

At the moment, Vlad believes he has found a clue in a manual outlining the keep's construction. Although the manual contains no diagrams, it confirms the existence of Kelsey's laboratory to anyone who spends 1-6 turns reading it. Vlad wants to examine the manual as soon as possible and attempts to excuse himself from the library, rudely if necessary. The PC has a 50% chance to notice the manual tucked in Vlad's cape; if questioned about it Vlad flees the area.

If the PC looks behind the chair, he will discover a pile of open books. These volumes all describe various aspects of Kincaid family history. Further investigation (about 1-2 turns) reveals a family tree containing a notation of Kelsey's upcoming marriage, dated 10 years ago.

Kelsey tampered with the family tree, but not successfully. The names of Kelsey's fiance, stepmother, and stepbrothers have been marred by scratches. After their deaths, Kelsey tried to remove their names from the family history but desisted when her scratches threatened to destroy her father's name as well.

The tome is not here, but don't dissuade the PC from looking. If the PC has not taken the hint from the library's description, he may find himself engaged in a search that could take hours. This search may create additional problems because the PC may be so absorbed in his task that the midnight hour may pass unnoticed (if the player isn't keeping track of time). All the guests will have unmasked themselves at midnight, and the startled PC may be discovered by an equally startled servant closing up the house and snuffing the keep's candles.

11. The Upper Hallway.

> A red carpet covers the stairway and leads to a single mahogany door on the southern wall. To the right of this hall an iron gate bars entry to a drab hallway devoid of light. The carpet beyond the gate is faded and covered with dust and patches of fallen plaster. A veil of cobwebs clings to the dilapidated hallway's upper corners and drapes its extinguished candles. A chilling draft passes through the bars and over your face.

Kelsey uses this hallway at least once a day to visit her father and holds the only key to this blocked-off wing of the keep. The gate is always locked, but Orchid found a way to avoid this obstacle by using the concealed door in her mistress's chambers. Unless the PC uses magic to get past this gate (such as a *knock* spell, *chime of opening,* or potion of *diminution*), he will be forced to search for another way into the west wing.

The PC might try to get the servant's gossip about the gate, but since Kelsey keeps a tight rein on her servants (decent paying jobs are rare in Brannon) the gossip is kept to a minimum. It is common knowledge that Kelsey had the upper level sealed off after her family's demise, but few know about the gate or dilapidated hallway.

12. Kelsey's Chamber.

> This bedchamber is decorated with a purple carpet and matching drapes. To the room's south, a large canopy bed overflows with plush-white silk and satin pillows. A vanity sits just to the right of the bed, and you can see an unopened jewelry box and several bottles of green liquid cluttering the vanity. Its shelves are open and disorganized, as if someone had been rummaging through them. A huge oaken cabinet sits to the west between two open closet doors.
>
> In the eastern part of the room you see a large cabinet next to a thick white door. A faint crack of light flashes under the white door, and a portrait of a distinguished-looking man holding a long sword hangs near it.

Orchid, Kelsey's pet banderlog, got her paws on some of her mistress's most prized outfits and jewelry. Orchid escaped her confinement in the laboratory by forcing the holding pen's door and making her way through the bedchamber's concealed hallway (area 12b). The bedroom reeks of perfume because Orchid spilled a bottle near the vanity. The banderlog is sulking

tonight because Kelsey has forbidden her to attend the ball and locked her in the holding pen in the laboratory (area 19). Orchid has, however, found something to take her mind off her troubles—Kelsey's jewelry collection and favorite pink gown. Thus, Orchid and her temper have put their mark on the bedchamber.

If the PC searches near the vanity, let the player roll a Wisdom ability check. If he succeeds, the PC finds Orchid's fresh footprint stained into the carpet. Describe the footprints as animal-like and let the player's imagination do the rest. The tracks lead away from the vanity and end at the edge of the concealed hallway connecting Kelsey's bedchamber to the west wing.

If the PC investigates the jewelry box, he will discover a diamond ring (1,200 gp), a gold chain (500 gp), and several claw marks in the box's silk fabric lining. The DM should award the PC 250 XP for not taking jewelry; penalize the PC a like amount for any theft.

The huge chest between the western doors conceals an entrance to the blocked-off section of the keep. The PC has the normal chance to discover concealed doors, with a minimum chance of 1-in-8. Access to this door may be obtained by rocking the cabinet back and forth several times; the PC succeeds with a successful Strength ability check. Once the cabinet is pulled back, the PC can enter the sealed wing; the lock to this door was destroyed years ago.

The portrait near the white door is Kelsey's father, Quintin Kincaid, as he appeared a year before his death. If the PC examines the portrait closely, he can see that Quintin wears a silver amulet in the form of the family crest.

12a. The Privy. If the PC investigates this brass-lined privy he will find a half-eaten bar of soap lying near the wash basin. This was a small snack with which Orchid was not too pleased.

12b. Concealed Hallway. This small hallway is choked with dust and cobwebs. Orchid's footprints end halfway down the corridor. Further evidence of the hallway's use lies in the strands of broken cobwebs from Orchid's recent trek down this passageway.

12c. Kelsey's Closet. This walk-in closet is a mass of jumbled dresses and gowns. Several outfits are split and torn, and a strong animal smell lingers in the air. A secret safe on the far wall contains Kelsey's spellbook and treasure. Kelsey has taken great pains to construct this safe, and even if the PC discovers its existence, he must still find a way to open it. (This may take a master thief, and is probably fare for a later adventure.) However, if the PC opens the safe, he will discover 4,500 gp, a diamond ring worth 1,500 gp, a *lightning bolt* scroll, and potions of *swimming, plant control, extra healing,* and *super-heroism.*

13. The Observatory.

> This circular room holds a giant cylinder which shoots up through the chamber's ceiling. A dusty table rests against the far wall and holds a pile of yellow charts and graphs. Many appear to deal with stars and constellations, but they are in poor condition. In the center of the floor an open trap door leads to a set of dark stairs spiraling downward.

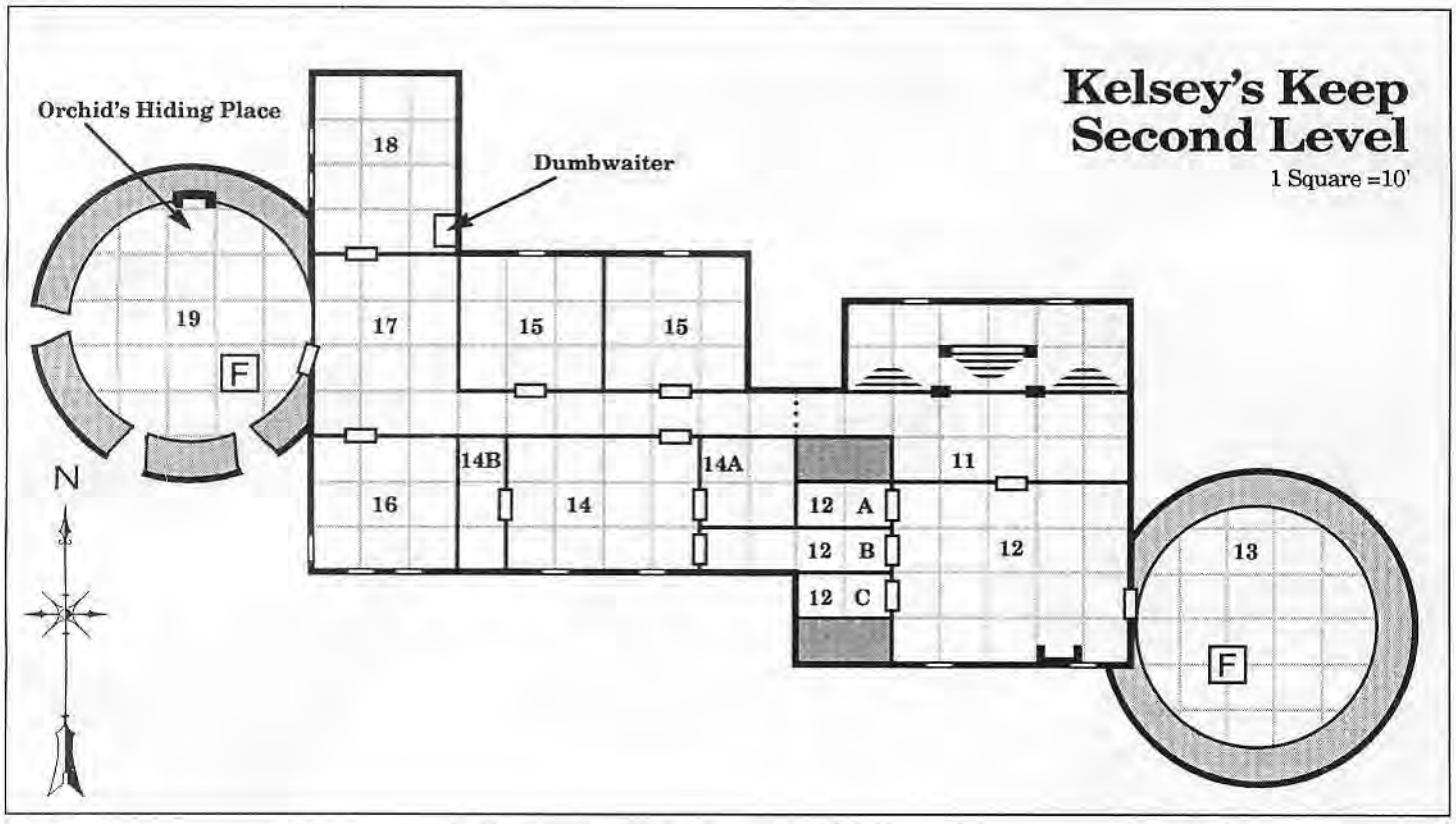
The light the PC saw underneath this chamber's door was lightning flashing outside—a storm is breaking over Brannon. The secret door at the bottom of the stairs is quite operational from this side and should make for an easy escape route if the PC needs to leave undetected. However, if the PC can descend from the tower's roof (with a spell, a rope, or a scroll of *flying*), he should also be able to traverse the tower's 60′ height without harm. Otherwise, he must search for another means of escape—a 60′ fall will mean almost certain death for a low to mid-level wizard PC.

The star charts are worthless, even to an astrologer. The smallish telescope is worth about 100 gp, but is far too bulky to carry undetected.

14. The Stepmother's Chamber.

> This dusty chamber, laced with cobwebs, still bears the scars of a small fire. Most of the furniture has been broken and destroyed, as if someone had taken an axe to it. A closer examination reveals that the ashes surrounding the bed are actually the remnants of a wardrobe.

There is nothing of value in this room



because Kelsey destroyed the contents long ago. If the PC examines the far west wall, he will discover a portrait of Kelsey's father and stepmother. Kelsey, blaming her stepmother for Quintin's death, slashed the half bearing her stepmother.

14a. Stepmother's Bathroom. This chamber resembles the privy in Kelsey's room, but a thick layer of dust is witness to its disuse. Propped in the corner is Quintin Kincaid's *battle axe +1,* covered with a great deal of dust. If it is cleaned, the axe proves to be in remarkably good condition. Kelsey used it to dismantle the rooms of her stepmother and stepbrothers.

14b. Stepmother's Closet. This large, empty, walk-in closet, contains nothing but a few discarded boxes and a broken mirror. Kelsey destroyed all of her stepmother's belongings ten years ago.

15. The Stepbrother's Rooms. These two rooms are similar to room 14, but the westernmost room is home to a family of six rats.

Rats (6): INT animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 15; HD ¼ each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA disease; SZ T (1' long); ML 4; XP 7 each; MM/300.

16. Kelsey's Old Room.

> This room has been swept clean of all furnishings except for a red dinner dress laid out on a young lady's bed. A bouquet of dried flowers rests on top of the dress. At the foot of the bed is a small table with a silver key resting on top of it.

This room has been unoccupied since the night Quintin Kincaid died. That night, Kelsey moved into her father's room, taking all her possessions with her. The only items left behind are the dress Kelsey wore the night she poisoned her family, the flowers her father brought her that same night, and the key to her diary. The diary can be found in the mummified hands of Quintin Kincaid's corpse in the upstairs dinning room.

17. Abandoned Atrium.

> Withered plants and shrubbery line the walls of this dilapidated atrium. Rain pelts the grimy skylights above. Although the west door is closed, the north door is slightly ajar. You can just make out candlelight flickering beyond.

The adventurer has a 10% chance to notice the talcum powder footprints near the bottom of the west door. The area contains little else.

18. Upper Dining Room.

> Pushing this chamber's creaking door open sends a cloud of dust down around your shoulders. With a few coughs, you slowly gather your senses and peer into the dusty chamber before you. The entire scene resembles something taken out of a nightmare: four well-preserved corpses sit around an oaken dining table. The cluttered table is smothered in a canopy of cobwebs and dust, and several rats squeal nervously near a flickering candelabra. Looking more closely, you see that three of the mummified corpses are male—the fourth wears a rotting evening dress. The male corpse at the head of the

table clutches a small silver casket in its withered hands.

All the corpses have been mummified, and although they look grisly, the PC should have no trouble identifying them as Kelsey's family from the portraits in the bedrooms. The silver casket in Quintin's hands holds Kelsey's diary, which details her plans to do away with her family and fiance. The last few entries describe her accidental poisoning of Quintin and her family's death. The last page is an apology written to her father; Kelsey placed the diary in her father's hands as a token of her love.

Although the diary alone isn't enough to convince the townsfolk of Kelsey's evil (after all, it could be a fake, an outsider's trick) it will provide the PC with the background to the murders, a clearer picture of Kelsey's personality, and perhaps a healthy respect for her ruthlessness.

19. Kelsey's Laboratory.

This circular chamber is windowless except for a pair of arrow slits set in the south wall. Flickering shadows on the chamber walls dance off various crates and boxes near the blazing fireplace. Steamy vapor crawls across the room from a bubbling cauldron which lies near the arrow slits. A pungent smell of rotting lizards and other nasty ingredients emanates from the cauldron, cutting the faint scent of perfume from the air.

Glancing to your left, you can see a large cabinet filled with jars and vials. Next to the cabinet is a long table cluttered with spiraling tubes and bubbling beakers. You can just make out Burford's shipment box resting among a collection of jars and steaming glassware. It is too dark to tell if the box's shipping seal has been tampered with.

The banderlog belately realized that her little temper tantrum might have been more trouble than it was worth, and she has positioned herself behind the crates near the fireplace. Orchid is fearfully peeking out between the crates, because she heard the PC's movements and thought her mistress was coming to punish her. When Orchid realizes the PC is an intruder, she jumps on one of the crates and pulls a cord, ringing the tower's warning bell. The bell's tone can be heard throughout the keep and will bring Kelsey racing to the lab. She arrives via the trap door in the tower's floor 2-4 rounds later. Because Orchid's movements behind the crate do tend to telegraph her presence, the player should not roll for surprise. In fact, the PC will have the first action, because Orchid forfeits the initiative to ring the tower's bell. Continue reading:

Before you can make your way to the shipment box, a large, hairy creature springs from behind a pile of crates to the north. The beast wears a pink dress and sports a sparkling tiara on its pearly white head. Its pink eyes focus on you as it reaches for a rope with one hand and adjusts its tiara with the other. Quickly the hairy figure pulls on the rope, ringing the tower's bell again and again. The sounding of the bell seems to enrage the beast; it flashes its yellow teeth at you and shifts its stance. Just when you think the hulking beast is about to charge, it begins hurling lab equipment at you.

Consider Orchid's new garb when describing her, because the PC may mistake her for some form of lycanthrope. She cuts quite a figure in Kelsey's pink dress and costume jewelry. At the moment, Orchid wears a glass tiara worth 75 gp, two silver bracelets worth 25 gp each, and a ceramic string of beads worth 20 gp.

Orchid (banderlog): INT low; AL N; AC 6; MV 6, climb 12; HD 4; hp 16; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2-5; SA throwing beakers; SD climbing; SZ S; ML 9; XP 125; MM/241.

Orchid is an albino banderlog, similar to a baboon, but smarter and with a better morale. Her favorite offensive tactic is to throw crates and bottles, and she does so until she is either defeated or the PC closes for combat.

Because her albino condition makes her susceptible to light, spells involving blinding light will have twice the normal effect on Orchid. In the jungle Orchid has a Movement Rate of 12 in the trees, but in the tower she is limited to her base Movement Rate of 6. Orchid's ammunition may have many different effects—the laboratory is loaded with many beakers containing poison, acid, and other dangerous substances. Use the following table each round Orchid throws something to determine its effect and damage. Roll 1d10 to determine the result of each throw:

1-3 Small crate strikes for 1-3 hp damage.
2-5 Broken glass from a beaker of non-caustic substance causes 1 hp damage.
6-8 Beaker of boiling liquid causes 2-5 hp damage. Orchid suffers no damage, due to her calloused paws.
9 Vial of acid inflicts 2-8 hp damage the first round and 1-3 hp the next (no splash damage).
10 Closed container of a caustic chemical that causes 1-4 hp damage and fills the chamber with a green fog. Treat this as a *wall of fog* spell cast at the 5th level of ability, affecting both the PC and Orchid.

If the PC defeats Orchid before she can ring the bell, he may have the opportunity to search this chamber and discover a secret trap door in the floor. If not, the PC will learn of the trap door when Kelsey emerges from it. If the PC has time to open the shipment, he finds the *tome of lich creation* still tucked away neatly in the box. If the PC must flee with the entire box, his movement may be penalized by the shipment, which weighs 30 lbs. Adjust encumbrance accordingly.

Once Kelsey arrives, she assesses the situation and casts her *shield* spell. Then, providing Orchid still stands, Kelsey casts an *enlarge* spell on her pet banderlog and commands it to engage the PC in melee. If Kelsey has already used her spells in the fireworks display at 11 P.M., she will keep her distance and allow Orchid to do her dirty work. If Orchid has been defeated, Kelsey stalls for time until she can get close enough to use her poisoned comb.

The PC might think the battle is drawing to a close once he defeats Orchid and puts Kelsey on her guard, but it's just beginning. Vlad Graves arrives through the laboratory's main door two rounds after Kelsey does, and he starts casting his own succession of spells. First, Vlad examines the lab with his *detect magic* spell, focusing on the aura emanating from the tome's hiding place. Vlad blasts Kelsey and Orchid (if the banderlog still stands) with his *magic missile* spell (Kelsey's *shield* spell protects her). He does not target the PC with his *magic missile* because he views Kelsey and her banderlog as the greater obstacle to his venture. Once he has cast these spells, Vlad uses his *jump*

spell to leap to the person holding the tome and attempt to steal it. After several rounds, Vlad casts his *darkness 15' radius* spell to escape, whether he wrested the tome away or not. If Vlad escapes with the tome, turn to the "Concluding the Adventure" section. In any event, the PC will have to escape on his own.

Take special care to make this particular combat runs smoothly. Map out the PC's position in relation to Orchid, Kelsey, and Vlad, and refer to the following time line.

Combat Time Line

Round	Event
1	PC arrives in lab.
2	Orchid rings bell.
4-6	Kelsey arrives.
7*	Kelsey casts her *shield* spell.
8*	Kelsey casts *enlarge* on Orchid, Vlad Graves arrives.
9*	Vlad casts his *detect magic* spell.
10*	Vlad casts his *magic missile* spell.
11*	Vlad casts his *jump* spell.
12*	Vlad tries to steal the tome.

* Subject to Kelsey's arrival

Orchid's battle cries and Kelsey's frantic flight through the masquerade create such a stir that the PC should have no trouble leaving once he gets past Kelsey. Not even Kelsey's guards will attempt to stop the PC; like the rest of the guests, the guards assume from his new appearance (from the colored beakers of acid and dye) that he is some summoned creature that broke loose from Kelsey's control. Only Granny Breadwood has sense enough to look at the PC's unmasked face, saying, "I've seen him. I got at his face, I did." Granny identifies him only if the PC has removed his mask, or if Orchid's melee attacks destroyed it (25% chance).

Once outside, the PC should have no problem escaping. No moon shines this night, and a storm is already in progress. Allow the PC to reach Burford's shop without incident, but give the player enough time to speculate on the possibility of a pursuing posse.

Concluding the Adventure

This adventure need not end once the PC escapes from the keep, and many spin-off adventures are possible. Kelsey won't take kindly to someone crashing her party. If Orchid has been harmed, Kelsey will hire a group of thuggish "detectives" to investigate the matter and bring the PC to justice. The DM can use any group of NPCs, but the group should be roughly equivalent to the PC's party. (The PC is likely to seek the security of his party after this adventure.) Don't spring these villains on the PC right away. Let the PC get a little comfortable, then break the bad news through a town crier circulating his description. The thugs might appear on a subsequent adventure.

Of course, the adventure may not go that well for the PC. He might end up in the Brannon jail, or Vlad may succeed in stealing the tome. However, such events also lend themselves to further adventures, as the PC's friends might wish to break him out of jail and help clear his good name either by going after Vlad or by exposing Kelsey and reacquiring the tome for Burford.

Every PC involved in returning the tometo Burford gains a 1,000 XP story award. If Burford and the PC mage get along, the old bookseller may pass his young acquaintance old charts and documents leading to future adventures. Ω

CLARSHH'S SEPULCHRE

BY WILLIE WALSH

An arcane scroll and an ancient cult

Artwork by Bob Klasnich

This module was used as part of a short campaign by the author, who introduced some new players to the AD&D® game at his home in Dublin, Ireland. Willie has other scenarios in the works and hopes they'll see print in future issues of DUNGEON® Adventures.

This AD&D module is for a party of five or six 1st-level adventurers of good alignment (at least 5 total levels). A small supply of +1 magical weapons will be on loan to them for the adventure, as well as some NPC allies.

The scenario involves both a treasure hunt and a dungeon adventure. It takes place in a wilderness ruin, adaptable to any campaign setting with a minimum of adjustment.

Adventure Background

The arcane are a race of giant humanoid merchants found wherever there is trade in magical items. Sereen, one of this race, has had a busy month doing the circuit of the large and populous towns of the land of Koros. He sold a magical sword to a young warrior more interested in swagger than actual work; traded three rare potions and half the warrior's payment for a staff a thief had acquired from a famous, though absentminded, wizard; used the remaining gold to recharge the staff; made inquiries concerning a certain adventuring party; on meeting the party exchanged the staff for six nonmagical scrolls, four potions, and an assortment of foreign coins his friends had found during a raid on a gnolls' lair.

As usual, Sereen offered neither receipts nor guarantees. His customers had his reputation alone as a guide to the standard of their purchases. It was said that one could buy anything at any time from Sereen, but that it was probably better not to inquire too closely as to their origins. It was not his business if an item went wrong or if an irate "former owner" turned up unexpectedly. The benefits of Sereen's merchandise outweighed the risks involved in buying it and his customers were, by and large, satisfied.

In any case, Sereen was pleased by his recent dealings, the moreso when he examined one of the six nonmagical scrolls (labelled "Dissertation on Mining Techniques") and found it disguised a message written in his own tongue. This message, invisible to other races,

claimed to reveal where one might find the tomb of a long-dead priest—and the *cube of force* buried with him.

Sereen knew that a fellow arcane had been slain in the area some years before. (Arcane have a form of racial telepathy such that an injury done to one is immediately known to all other arcane.) It was possible that this other had learned the tomb's location and felt it imprudent to brave whatever guardians it might have. Or perhaps this arcane traveler was attacked in the wilderness while searching for adventurers to explore the tomb, and his instructions were hidden for years before turning up again.

Sereen did not know the full circumstances behind the scroll's directions, but he was convinced it was authentic. It had turned up at a good time—Sereen had funds aplenty to hire adventurers to complete the hunt—and, more importantly, he had a customer willing to pay dearly for a *cube of force.*

For the Dungeon Master

Almost 30 years ago a sect of Nergal, the Babylonian god of the netherworld, was led by a charismatic priest named Clarshh. Nergal's worshipers sacrificed humans and treasures (the proceeds from evil actions) to the god, which made the cultists unpopular, to say the least, with their neighbors.

The cult had already been driven out of one country when it moved to Koros. To prevent the cult from stagnating, Clarshh immediately set up shrines and secret meeting-places in all the towns. The resulting bribery, blackmail, and occasional assassination alarmed the authorities. They had heard of the cult's activities elsewhere and were unwilling to allow it a toe-hold in their country. With the aid of carefully cultivated informers, they identified and targeted the leader, Clarshh, for removal and trial. He and other cult leaders were swooped up in a raid and tried for their crimes. The leaders were executed, and this blow led to the quick collapse of the cult. But before Clarshh's body could be publicly displayed as a warning to others, it was spirited away and never heard of again.

That was 30 years ago. Just 18 years later (12 years ago, as we join the story), an aging beggar offered to sell information to an arcane merchant named Telbot. The beggar was once a cultist, and he had drifted from job to menial job since the cult's dissolution. Though he had now fallen on hard times, he claimed to have been present when Clarshh's body (and a large treasure) were interred in a tomb hidden in the hills.

When Telbot was satisfied the man was truthful, he wrote down all the beggar could remember from those times. Telbot transferred the information to *arcane runes,* hidden in the mining document text. The ex-cultist was saved from starvation and Telbot learned where to find a magical item to increase his treasure.

Deciding to set out for a larger town with the encoded scroll to hire adventurers, Telbot planned the sale of his new treasure in advance. While underway, his entourage was attacked by a large and well-armed bandit gang, including a rogue wizard with a *hold monster* spell and the good luck to overcome the arcane's natural magical resistance. Slain without ever finding the tomb, Telbot and his scroll passed out of history. In time, the scroll came into the hoard of a gnoll tribe, and lately to some adventuring friends of Sereen. Unaware that the concealed key to a great treasure was hidden within, the scroll was added to the pile of goods that the group bartered for a magical staff. Because he can read *arcane runes* on sight, Sereen now knows where the long-lost sepulchre of Clarshh can be found.

Players' Introduction

Sereen's business circuit is wide and his contacts many, so the arcane can reach the adventurers quite easily. He hopes to hire them to travel with him to the priest's sepulchre, and plans to offer a large reward to recover Clarshh's *cube of force* (though he does not initially tell them the exact goal of the hunt).

The arcane prefers novice adventurers to a more experienced party. The latter might demand a larger reward and may cheat Sereen of his due when the treasure is recovered.

If the PCs are in the wilderness in search of adventure, Sereen is following in his giant covered wagon. If they are in town, the arcane has hired a stable or warehouse to conduct his interview. Because he fears that the sight of a blue-skinned giant might elicit a hostile response, Sereen sends Tooroot, his talking owl, to make the first contact.

Read or paraphrase the following boxed description to introduce players to the adventure.

> It has been a long day and the party is glad to be preparing to bed down. Everyone is settled when there is a small sound like polite coughing.
>
> "Ahem?" says a voice. "Excuuuse me, please. Couuuld I have a woooord?"
>
> Looking up, you see a pair of round, pale eyes. Gradually a shape appears out of the darkness and you realize the visitor is a large owl. Surprisingly, the owl is speaking!

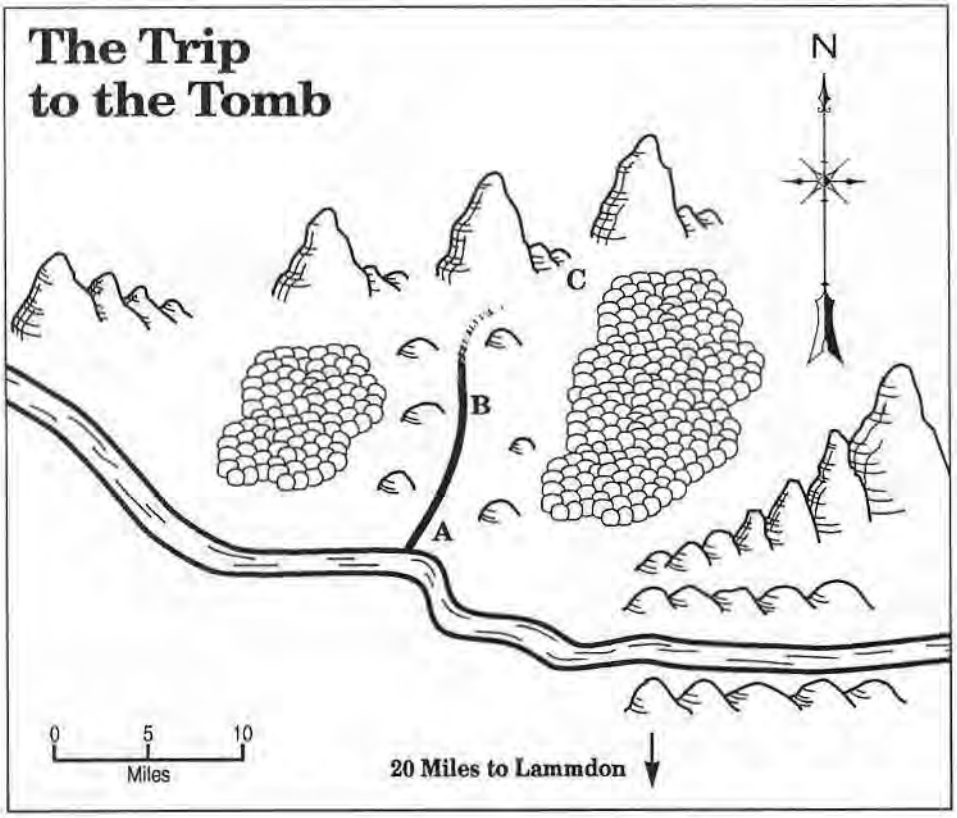
Tooroot can *detect good* at will, and prefers to converse with good-aligned PCs. He asks the PCs if they will consider employment involving the loan of some magical weapons, combat with monsters, a flat fee, and a percentage of monetary profits recovered. If they express an interest, Tooroot says he will take them to his friend who can give them the full details, otherwise he must be on his way.

In conversation, Tooroot is demonstrative—he'll ruffle his feathers or spread his wings to emphasize a point. He lengthens any narrow vowels, especially ones with a "u" or "oo" sound, but speaks fluent common otherwise. The owl won't elaborate on Sereen's offer, nor allow himself be tricked (Wisdom 21) into blurting out any information.

Tooroot is part of Sereen's small entourage but doesn't follow him for pay. Instead he believes the merchant's strict attitude to profit could be swayed to the cause of good. (He wants to convert Sereen's alignment of Lawful Neutral to Lawful Good). The conversion is slow in coming, though Tooroot doesn't miss an opportunity to "advise" Sereen who to befriend, employ, or trade with. For his part, Sereen avails himself of the owl's powers of speech and detection to size up clients, though he makes his own decisions. The two are friends, but each secretly despairs of converting the other to his way of looking at life.

If PCs accept Tooroot's invitation he leads them to a side track, or side street as appropriate, where Sereen waits away from prying eyes.

Tooroot (talking owl): INT exceptional; AL LG; AC 3; MV 1, fly 36 (C); HD 2+2; hp 14; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-2; SA swoop (if swooping from 50′ or more, gains +2 to attack roll, doesn't get a beak attack, but doubles damage from claw hits); SD never surprised,



Wisdom 21, *detect good* at will, immune to *cause fear, charm person, command, fear, forget, friends, hold person, hypnotism, ray of enfeeblement,* and *scare*; MR 20%; SZ S (6′ wingspan); ML 15; XP 975; MM/27 (Bird).

The bird leads you for quite a while, finally landing and pointing with one wing to a shadowy corner.

Looking there, you are startled to see a giant humanoid figure. It steps forward into the moonlight and you see it is unlike any other giant you've heard of. He is 12′ tall, bald, and wearing expensive, well-tailored clothing.

"I am Sereen," he says in a cultured, deep voice. "If you step this way we can conduct our interview in more comfortable surroundings."

You hear the click of a bolt being withdrawn, and a rectangle of light shines from an open doorway. Four large, spotted cats, each with a jewel-encrusted collar, eye you from the threshold, but move aside as Sereen enters.

In the light you see that in addition to his great size, the giant's skin color is also striking—instead of the flesh tones of most humanoids, this huge man's skin is a rich blue.

"Come," he says. "I have business I would discuss with you."

The arcane are tall, lanky, blue giants with elongated faces and thin fingers; each finger has one more joint than is common in most humanoid life. They dress in robes, although they also wear heavier armor (as will Sereen, when he joins the party later), a combination of chain links with patches of plate (AC 3).

Like most arcane, Sereen has surrounded himself with an entourage of guards; the cats and Tooroot are Sereen's constant companions. If they aren't enough to dissuade bandits, he uses a gigantic hand axe in combat. He won't take kindly to being threatened, blackmailed, or insulted.

Up to three times per day Sereen can become *invisible* or walk through a *dimension door* to avoid trouble. He can use any magical item, even items normally restricted to a particular character class.

The door before the PCs leads to Sereen's wagon, a barn, or a warehouse rented for the occasion. If the PCs enter, the cats—four cheetahs—growl but remain at bay unless provoked or ordered to attack by Tooroot or Sereen.

Sereen tells the adventurers that he is hiring guards and dungeoneers. He plans to travel within the week to a place lately rediscovered—a dungeon and tomb said to be rich in treasure, but also guarded by several monsters. He himself (he says) cannot enter the dungeon by reason of his great size, and must hire others to do so.

In return for their services, Sereen offers a flat fee of 1,000 gp per person (or 7,000 gp, to be divided as they see fit, if more than six PCs participate). They will also share 20% of the monetary treasure recovered.

To assist them against the monsters they meet, the arcane will lend each adventurer, including spellcasters, a +1 magical weapon appropriate to his class and proficiency. At the end of the adventure, they will return these weapons and their contract will be considered ended.

Sereen tells the PCs he has found a scroll made by another of his race. The arcane's stock and trade is magical items, and the scroll hints that a *cube of force*—an item for which Sereen has a ready customer—is hidden somewhere in the tomb. He will not reveal the location or provide any other details until they reach the tomb. This way he hopes to avoid attracting claim-jumpers who might race to find the place before them.

Sereen is very experienced in the wiles of humanity and believes everything said to him must be considered from all angles. Often he reviews a conversation with Tooroot later, in case it had some hidden meaning the owl may have picked up on. He has many contacts among local officials, tradesmen, merchants, and wealthy folk. If he imagines any slight or insult, he will use these contacts to make life difficult for the adventurers.

Sereen the Arcane: INT genius; AL LN; AC 5 (3); MV 12; HD 10; hp 47; THAC0 11; # AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD *invisibility, dimension door*; MR 40%; SZ L (12′ tall); ML 15; XP 3,000; MM/8; giant hand axe (damage as battle axe).

Cheetahs (4): INT animal; AL N; AC 5; MV 15, sprint 45; HD 3; hp 23, 18, 15, 13; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-8; SA rear claws 1-2 each; SD surprised on a 1; SZ M (4′-4 1/2′ long); ML 10; XP 175 each; MM/36 (Cats, Great).

The Trip to the Tomb

The tomb is located 50 miles north of a town called Lammdon, near the third mountain in a very distinctive chain. Sereen travels by wagon—an eight-wheeled, 12-horse monstrosity that reduces the entourage's Movement Rate to 12. Regardless of mounts used (unless, of course, they're even slower), the entourage travels 24 miles per day. One night in the wilderness will be necessary.

The following encounters refer to the wilderness map.

A. Wilderness Trail. Having forded the quick-flowing river, the PCs come to a blurred trail that seems to follow the northern tributary toward the hills. Sereen says this was once a paved thoroughfare to a long-abandoned mountain town. Now it is a cart track.

The road marks the territorial edge of a pack of blink dogs who roam the forest and hill country east of the river. The party meets them within an hour of setting out on their journey.

The cats become alert and wary as soon as they see the blink dogs. Tooroot can detect the dogs' good alignment and warn the PCs that the dogs are not necessarily hostile.

The blink dogs patrol the area looking for prey and evil creatures to kill or drive off. Once they determine the PCs aren't burning the forest or ruining the wilderness, they may approach in the hope of receiving a handout or simply to be friendly (50% chance). PCs able to communicate with animals or who have an affinity for them (for instance, rangers) may find out that the dogs don't visit the ruined town that Sereen is traveling to. The dogs explain that it is haunted by evil creatures that are unaffected by their attacks.

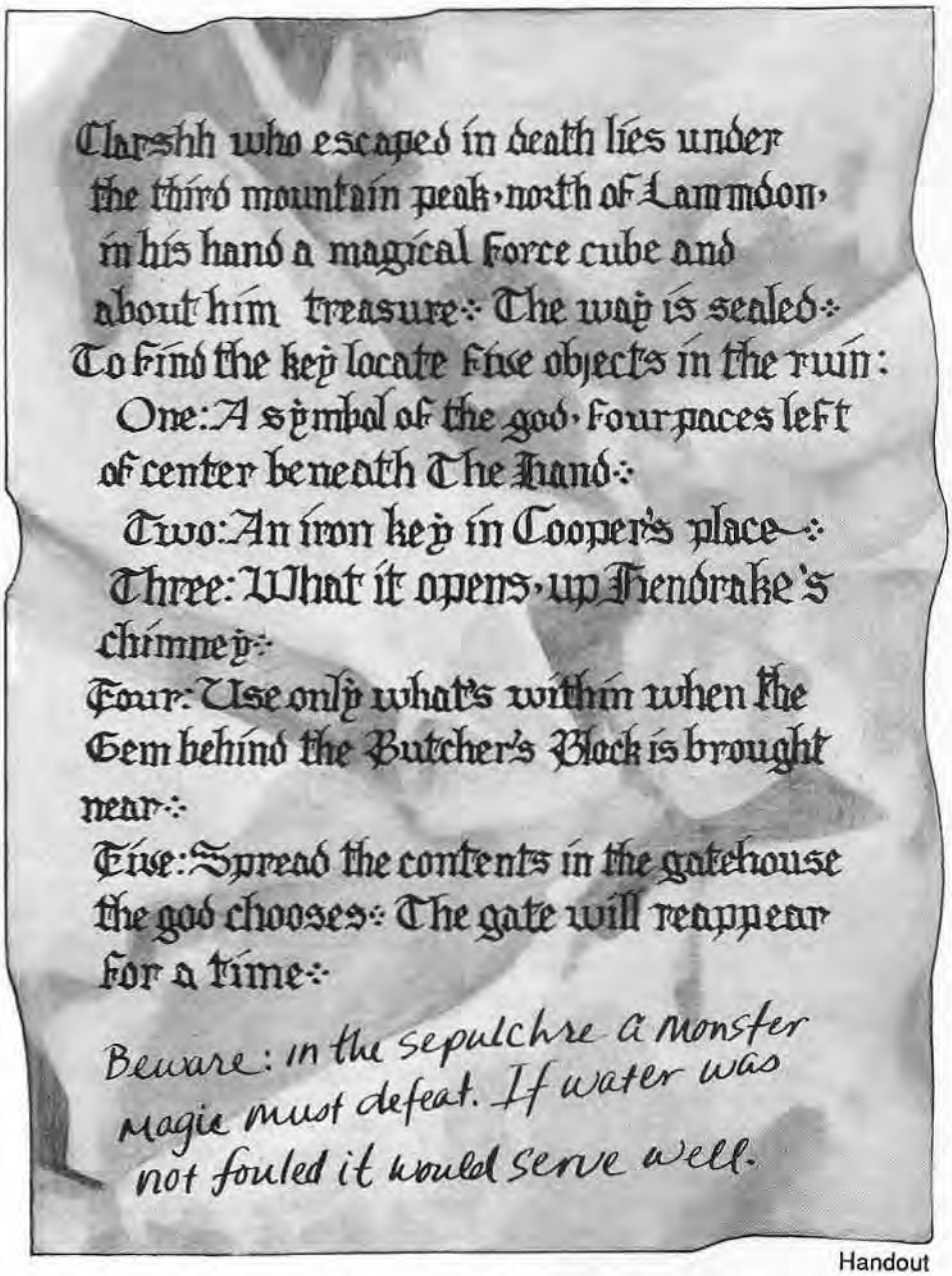
If the dogs feel seriously threatened, or don't feel like approaching directly (50% chance), they blink away *en masse* and do not return.

Blink dogs (12): INT average; AL LG; AC 5; MV 12; HD 4; hp 30, 23, 20 (×3), 19, 18 (×4), 17, 16; THAC0 17; AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA from rear 75% of the time; SD teleportation; SZ M (4' long); ML 11; XP 270 each; MM/57 (Dog).

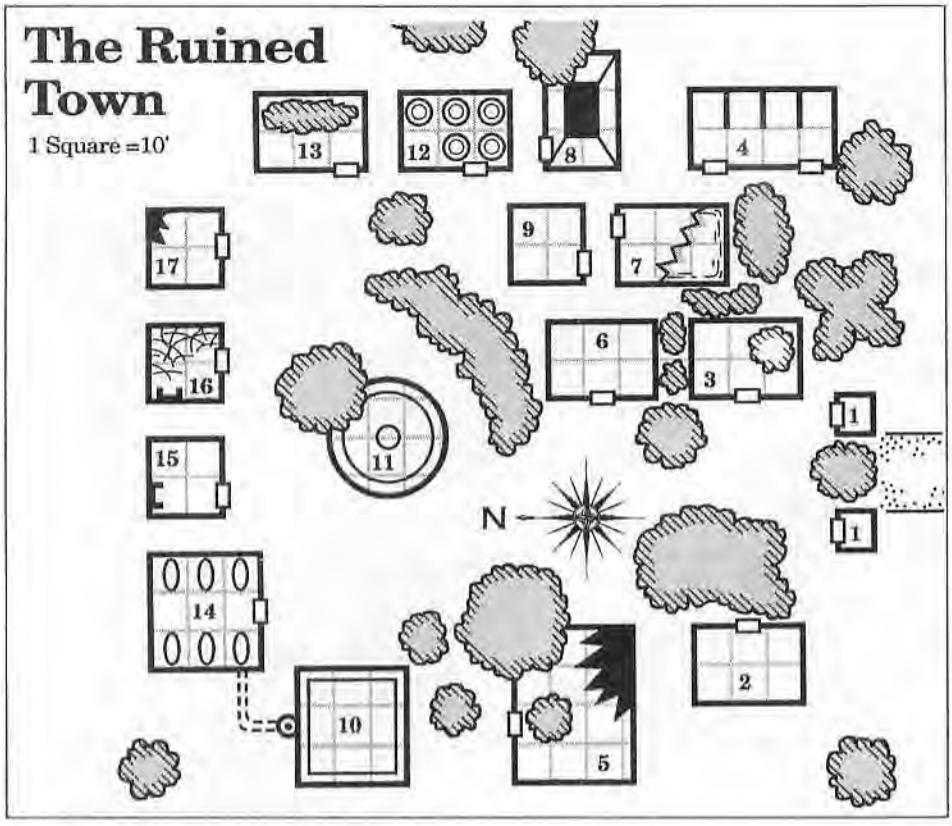
B. Marker Stone. The trail passes by a marker at this point—a 4'-tall stone standing upright by the road and carved with the blurred image of a man carrying a shield. It has no other symbols or runes. The vegetation around the marker is noticeably sparse, as if reluctant to grow near it.

PCs handling the stone or checking it for secret compartments find nothing unusual. It is a sign for followers of Nergal—the man carrying the shield is an image of the god. The stone's apparent effect on the vegetation may frighten the adventurers, but it holds no dangers for them. They may even smash the marker if desired. The sparse vegetation is a coincidence—the stone cannot harm it.

From this point the road swings away from the river, making almost straight for the third peak in the mountain chain. The country gets even wilder closer to the mountains. It is also silent, which may unsettle the arcane's entourage.


Clarshh who escaped in death lies under
the third mountain peak, north of Lammdon,
in his hand a magical force cube and
about him treasure. The way is sealed.
To find the key locate five objects in the ruin:
One: A symbol of the god, four paces left
of center beneath The Hand.
Two: An iron key in Cooper's place.
Three: What it opens, up Fiendrake's
chimney.
Four: Use only what's within when the
Gem behind the Butcher's Block is brought
near.
Five: Spread the contents in the gatehouse
the god chooses. The gate will reappear
for a time.
Beware: in the sepulchre a monster
magic must defeat. If water was
not fouled it would serve well.
Handout

C. The Old Town. The track briefly becomes a stretch of well-paved road before disappearing into a ruined town at the foot of the mountain. Most of the town has crumbled, its walls are humps and hummocks covered with grass and weeds. PCs will have to move about on foot, or fly, to explore the houses that remain; horses and ponies will be quickly



lamed if ridden among the town's treacherous footing. The DM should prepare a bird's-eye view of the town as Tooroot is willing to fly over it and describe what he sees, for mapping purposes, to the PCs. He cannot note cellars or hidden monsters.

Sereen himself remains surrounded by his cats, gripping his axe nervously, and steadfastly refusing to enter the ruined town. If necessary, he reminds the adventurers that he is paying them to deal with the dangers involved.

Trees and bushes have grown in and around the roofless buildings. These give concealment modifiers as soft cover, providing some protection against missiles but not against area spells like *fireball* or *lightning bolt.* A character firing missiles suffers −2 to attack targets among the undergrowth.

The broken walls of the surviving buildings provide 50% hard cover; missile fire suffers −4 to attack rolls against anyone sheltering here. (See the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide,* pages 99-100, for details.)

The town was already abandoned in the time of Clarshh, but was once home to a few followers of the sect, so his body was brought here. They had hoped to bring him back to life (or even unlife) at a later date when the sect had more resources. Meanwhile, they used the powers left to them (some high-level scrolls, magical items, and treasures) to hide and protect the tomb, leaving the means to open it hidden until the day when the sect would rise again. Since they never regained any power locally, Clarshh remained buried. Now, with Telbot's help and Sereen's scroll, the PCs have a chance to find and plunder the dead priest's tomb.

Sereen's Scroll

The scroll, when translated from *arcane runes,* reads as shown on the player handout. The entire document, including the note at the bottom, was meant to be explained in person to the adventurers Telbot never lived to hire. The scroll provides an enigmatic guide to what the PCs are searching for in the ruined town described below.

Ruined Town

1. Gate Posts. These twin stone huts with conical stone roofs were once sentry posts for the gates. The holes holding the hinges are all that remain.

The right gate post contains the entrance to Clarshh's tomb, albeit out of phase with the rest of the area. Searching or digging reveals nothing; the magical entrance must be summoned using the process described in the scroll.

2. Tailor's Shop. A shop selling fancy clothing once stood here. The roof has fallen into the single story building. PCs must push through the bushes hiding the entrance or climb over the wall to enter.

A single poisonous snake hides in the bushes. Flames within a few feet of the snake inflict a −6 morale modifier on the reptile.

Poisonous snake: INT animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 15; HD 2+1; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison (saving throw at −1 or incapacitated for 1-4 days, onset time 2-8 rounds); SZ S (5' long); ML 8; XP 175; MM/320-321.

3. Bakery. Once a bakery, this building has had its ovens removed and is now only a shell. A tree grows 10' above the level of the naked walls. A wasps' nest hangs from one branch. Anyone climbing in the tree or firing an arrow or stone at the papery nest will anger the swarm. If angered, the wasps attack anyone within 20' of the nest.

Attacks with weapons have little effect against the swarm. Area effect spells that do damage greater than the swarm's hit points will disperse it.

Wasp swarm: INT animal; AL N; AC 8; MV 6; HD 4; hp 12; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SZ, swarm 10' cube; ML 6; XP 120; New Monster.

4. Stables. The ramshackle stables are a two-story structure, with a hayloft in the upper portion. Just the roof timbers remain, the wooden shingles long ago blown off.

The stable's only item of interest is a ladder with one rung missing. It weighs 100 lbs. and is 25' long.

5. Inn of Five Fingers. A faded sign of beaten tin swings outside the door, proclaiming this ruin the "Inn of Five Fingers." The roof has blown off, leaving the interior relatively clear of debris. The floor in the southeast corner has subsided into the cellar.

This is the "Hand" alluded to in the scroll. The item hidden here is a small

figurine of Nergal, buried in the floor of the cellar. It is a statuette of an armed man with a shield, similar to the figure on the stone marker at area B.

Adventurers lowered by rope, or making Climbing checks can safely reach the cavity below. Others upset the debris and fall 15′ to the cellar floor for 1d6 + 1d3 damage.

Lying on the floor is a scattering of treasure: 3 pp, 75 gp, 13 sp, 15 cp, and a potion of *extra healing*.

If the PCs take four paces west of the center of the floor they find the right spot to dig for the first component. About 1′ down is a small gold statuette worth 100 gp, wrapped in a cloth.

In addition to holding treasure and one of the missing components, the cellar is also home to eight stirges that sleep hanging from the rafters. If awakened, or if the PCs enter near nightfall, the monsters attack.

Stirges (8): INT animal; AL N; AC 8; MV 3, fly 18 (C); HD 1 + 1; hp 9, 7, 6 (×5), 4; THAC0 17 (as 4-HD monster); #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA blood drain (1d4 per round until 12 hp are drained); SZ S (2′ wingspan); ML 8; XP 175 each; MM/332.

6. Campsite. This building has been used as a campsite at least three times in the past year, the last visit about a month ago. Firewood is stacked neatly in a corner and the ashes of an old fire can be seen to the southeast.

A ranger or druid with the party can guess that rangers sometimes camp here. Searching among the firewood reveals three vials of holy water.

7. Toad's Lair. This building, once a butcher's shop, has a stone-lined cellar filled with water. (The owner also used the ice house at area 8.) The floorboards over the cellar have rotted, making a pool open to the sky. Along the walls of the shop is a continuous rail, hung with rusted hooks for displaying meat. A dull, rusty cleaver and a mass of well-gnawed bones at the edge of the pool also hint at the former occupants' trade.

Tooroot will not have seen that the pool is now the lair of a giant toad. It goes out to hunt but has learned that daylight hours when neither the stirges (area 5) nor shadows (area 16) are active are the safest times.

A gnomish or halfling adventurer who stumbles across the toad will be considered fair game. Larger creatures will be given a wider berth.

The cellar has a loose stone block behind which the cultists hid the gemstone referred to in the scroll. (The "Butcher's Block" is not the large wooden table PCs may search for. None of the shop's furniture remains.) If the gemstone is recovered it serves as one of the components needed to open the entrance to the tomb. However, it rests 10′ under water, so PCs will have to dive to find it. Rules for holding one's breath can be found in the *Player's Handbook* (page 122).

A Wisdom ability check, at −2 penalty, is sufficient to discover the block in the murky water. It has shifted over the years and protrudes slightly from the surrounding wall. Someone with a Strength of 12 or more can pull it out, revealing the cavity and the magical gem. The toad will not appreciate trespassers taking a dip in its pool without permission.

Giant toad: INT animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 6, hop 6; HD 2 + 4; hp 9; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SA +3 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls, attack in midair or at end of leap; SZ M (5′ long); ML 7; XP 120; MM/345.

8. Ice House. This building was built to store ice and perishables. A wooden landing and stairs once descended just inside the door to the floor, 20′ below. Now there is just an open pit, partially littered with rubble. PCs may climb down using any safe method—falling damage is 1d6 per 10′ fallen.

Among the debris are six giant rats who prefer to flee to their burrows rather than attack. If cornered or pressed they fight.

Giant rats (6): INT semi; AL N(E); AC 7; MV 12, swim 6; HD ½; hp 4, 3 (×2), 2 (×2), 1; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA disease; SZ T (2′ long); ML 5; XP 15 each; MM/300.

9. Clerk's Office. This building was a clerk or scribe's office where townsfolk could have letters read or written. The shelving has crumbled and cannot support any great weight. Ten dry inkwells are scattered about; they can hold water from the fountain (area 11). Scrabbling about the ruin scrounging for inkwells will disturb a giant centipede resting in the damp rubble.

Giant centipede: INT non; AL N; AC 9; MV 15; HD 2 hp; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg nil; SA poison (save at +4 bonus or be paralyzed for 2d6 hours); SZ T (1′ long); ML 5; XP 35; MM/42.

10. Cistern. A stone cistern rests on 20′-high stilts here. A ceramic pipe runs from it to the bath-house (area 14). The water in this cistern is freshened by rain on a regular basis and the party may be tempted to drink from it. Birds and bats come here often to drink but are sometimes the victims of the throat leeches living in the waters.

The party will come to no harm unless they or their mounts drink the water. Each drink of unfiltered water has a 10% cumulative chance of containing a leech.

The leech sucks blood at the rate of 1-3 hp damage per round for 10 rounds. Each round it is lodged in the victim's throat there is a 50% chance the victim chokes for 1d4 hp damage. Anyone choking for three successive rounds dies on the third round. Placing a thin, heated metal object such as a wire into the bloated leech will burst and kill it; the victim suffers no further damage.

Throat leeches (4): INT non; AL N; AC 10; MV 1; HD 1 hp; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA choke; SZ T (1″); ML 6; XP 35 each; MM/219 (Leech).

11. Central Fountain. This was a square of sorts, in its middle a circular fountain at which horses drank. The fountain, in the shape of three rearing unicorns, no longer flows (green copper pipes are visible from each unicorn mouth) but the basin—15′ in diameter—has retained its integrity. Weeds, rushes, and frogs inhabit the stagnant pool.

A clump of black dirt blocks the drain that creates the necessary siphon effect needed to run the fountain. If the dirt is cleared and each pipe is sucked on for a moment, the fountain's cycle restarts. If the potion of *sweet water* found near the skeletons (see area 13) is added to the basin (or the fountain is simply allowed to run for 12 hours) it turns to holy water, just as it once was. Many years ago, the fountain was dedicated to a good deity before being fouled and clogged by followers of Nergal. The holy water in this pool will be useful against the guardian of the crypt (See area 31, below).

12. Store Room. Once a storage area of some kind, this place now has only five upturned empty barrels in it. Rain has kept their timbers from shrinking and so they remain water-tight.

Beneath the barrel standing nearest the north wall is a single iron key that opens the coffer in area 16.

13. Skeletons. Three bushes grow from this building's earthen floor in a tight, natural hedge. Tangled among the shrubbery's limbs are two skeletons—explorers slain by stirges (from area 5). PCs may believe the plants were responsible, but they just grew through the dead bodies and are neither intelligent nor hostile.

The first skeleton's armor and weapons have rusted away, but a helmet attached to the skull is still intact. This is a *helm of comprehending languages and reading magic.* A wearer can understand 90% of strange tongues and writings, and 80% of magical writings (including *arcane runes*). The device is a normal helmet in all other respects.

The second skeleton's gear has likewise been destroyed by the passage of time, save for a gold belt buckle set with a single large ruby. The item is worth 600 gp. Broken up, the gold is worth 150 gp, while the ruby is worth about 300 gp.

Lying almost obscured by a drift of dead leaves is a potion of *sweet water* that fell from one of the victims' packs. This can be used to purify the fountain (area 11) to create holy water, as hinted on the bottom of Sereen's scroll.

14. Bath House. Six enamelled iron tubs are sunken into the tiled floor here. A tap on the wall drips water in a steady stream, eroding the tile work near the southwest corner. The tap leads to the cistern outside (area 10) and is harmless if left alone. If it is tinkered with, it falls off, releasing a high-pressure stream of cold water for the next 10 rounds.

The jet effectively forms a 20'-long cone with a 3" base diameter reaching a 10' diameter at its furthest extremity. PCs caught in the jet must make a successful saving throw vs. paralysis or be bowled over for 1-3 hp damage.

Trapped by the slippery enamel in the bottom of the tub nearest the northeast corner is a single spider, still scrambling up and sliding down the slick enameled tiles.

Hairy spider: INT low; AL NE; AC 8; MV 12, web 9 (spins no web itself); HD 1-1; hp 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison (+2 saving throw bonus, +5 bonus to attacks once attached to victim; SZ T (6" diameter); ML 10; XP 120; MM/326.

15. Hovel. About 10 years ago, the roof of this single-room 20' × 20' hovel collapsed. Picking through the wreckage yields very little of use.

The only intact structures are the fireplace and chimney. Anyone who disturbs the chimney releases a cloud of common bats that fly out in a panic, but they do no other damage. Spellcasters in the midst of casting a spell may be interrupted by the many near misses.

Bats (30): INT animal; AL N; AC 8 (4 under ideal flying conditions); MV 1, fly 24 (B); HD 1-2 hp; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA extinguish torches (1% chance per bat encountered per round), spellcasters must make a Wisdom roll to cast spells, −2 attack roll penalty; SZ T (1'); ML 3; XP 15 each; MM/15.

16. Second Hovel. This 20' × 20' hovel is roofless, and the interior is filled with long strands of cobwebs. The spider inhabitants are harmless and scurry away if the webs are broken or burned.

If the PCs explore the chimney in this hovel, trouble awaits them. Two shadows hide there during the day, emerging at night to stalk the ruined town and torment any living creatures. If they are disturbed or if the PCs camp near the town at night, the monsters attack. In all but the brightest light they are 90% undetectable, so even PCs looking up the chimney may not notice them.

Part of the blockage up this chimney is a small padlocked wooden coffer. Rogue PCs may pick the lock, but the key is hidden nearby, under one of the barrels in the Inn of Five Fingers (area 5, above).

Inside the coffer is a vial of silvery powder, a special *dust of appearance* needed to find the entrance to Clarshh's sepulchre. If unstoppered it acts as *dust of appearance*, but won't, if scattered, reveal the opening to the out-of-phase tomb entrance, just the trap door cover. It shows the way only when the gem from area 7 is brought close to the dust. (See "The Catacombs" below for full clarification).

Any treasure the undead took from victims has been cast into the cellar at area 5, above.

Shadows (2): INT low; AL CE; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 16, 15; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-5+special; SA strength drain; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; MR immune to *sleep, charm, hold,* and cold-based attacks; SZ M (6' tall); ML special; XP 420 each; MM/312.

17. The Troll. This 20' × 20' building was once the shelter of a passing illusionist (a specialist wizard) who stayed a night here. To protect himself against intruders he cast a *programmed illusion* of a vicious troll that would appear out of a hole in the floor if any living humanoid entered. The illusion was never triggered and its special duration means it is still in force—PCs may yet set it off.

Anyone actively disbelieving the presence of a troll gains a saving throw vs. spells; success indicates he sees through the trick. (See the spell description, *PH,* page 180.) Otherwise, run the combat normally, recording the illusory damage to the PCs and the troll as it progresses.

The troll appears to have all the attacks and powers of a real monster. One notable difference is that it doesn't leave the hovel to pursue PCs, and it disappears as soon as it is "slain" or when 24 hours elapse, whichever happens first. There is nothing else of interest in the empty hovel.

If a PC takes enough damage to "die," he collapses in a faint. Let the player make a system shock roll for the PC. If the PC survives, he regains consciousness 1d3 turns later with his illusory damage healed. Smart PCs will quickly realize that it was all an illusion.

If the PC fails the roll, he believes the damage is real and his mind makes his body cease functioning. In short, he dies.

Using fire against the troll always appears to work (flames and heat cover the troll), but it may also set the building ablaze. Roll an item saving throw against fire (5 or better for nonmagical fire, 7 or better for magical fire). If the roll fails, the building will burn fiercely within one turn, then smolder for hours.

Anyone who "kills" the troll should be awarded the monster's full XP value. After all, the risk is just as great as fighting a real troll.

Troll: INT low; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 6+6; hp 28; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4+4/1d4+4/5d4; SA severed limbs attack (unadjusted 20 with edged weapon will sever a limb); SD regeneration; SZ L (9'); ML 14; XP 1,400; MM/349.

The Catacombs

If the PCs recover the statuette from area 5 and carry it within 20′ of the sentry posts (area 1), it grows notably warmer and hums audibly, nearest the eastern 10′ × 10′ structure. The hidden entrance is inside this building.

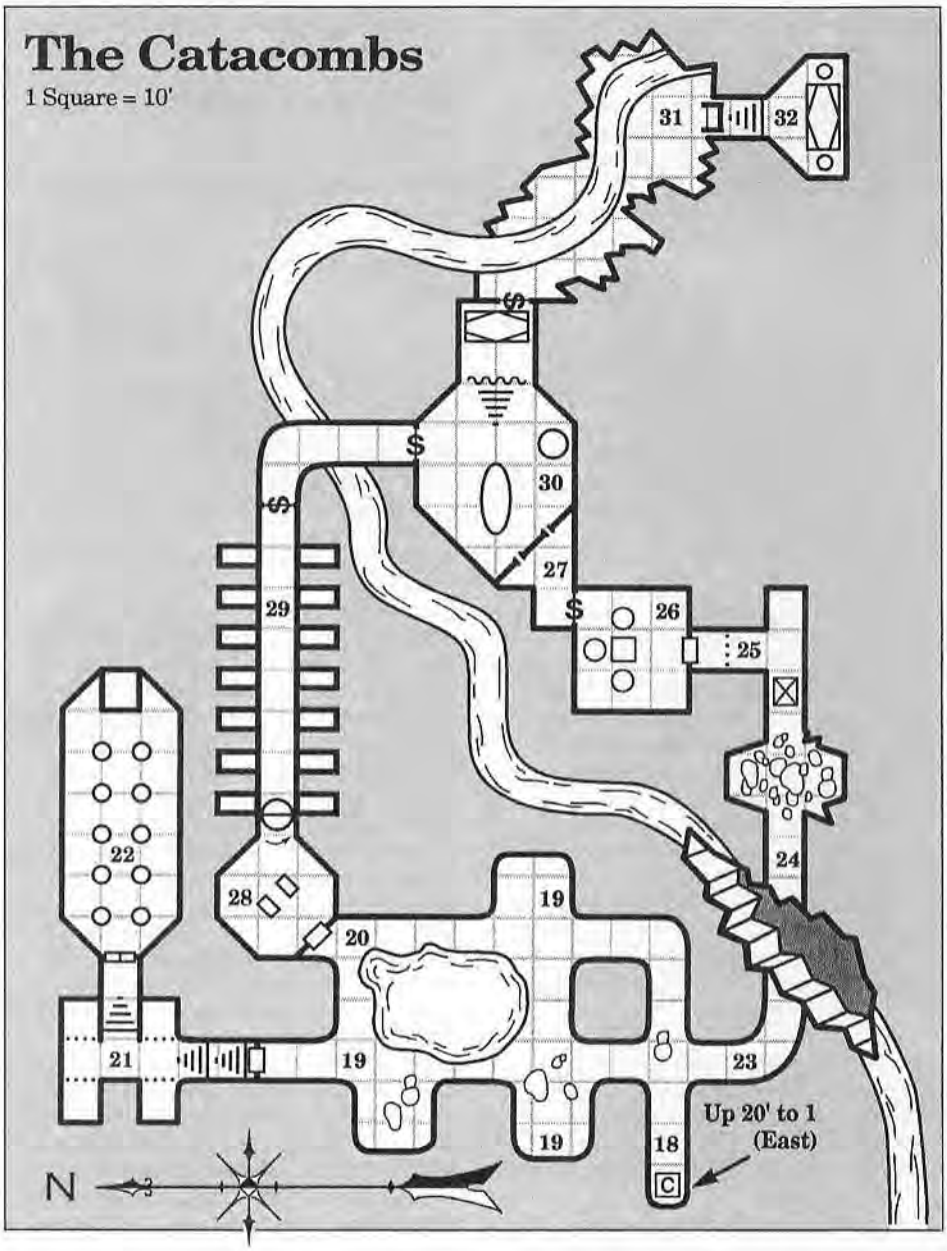
The iron key (from area 12) opens the coffer (from area 16), revealing a vial of silvery powder. (The coffer may be opened with thieves' tools if the key was not discovered). The *dust of appearance* in the vial is sufficient for four applications, and Sereen will tell PCs it must be sprinkled or thrown in the air to work.

If the *dust* is sprinkled inside the eastern sentry box, a faint outline of a floor trap door appears, only to fade and disappear after a few minutes. No amount of probing or digging reveals an entrance.

If the magical gem from the flooded cellar (area 7) is held close to the *dust*, if it is on the floor when the dust is sprinkled, or if it is carried by a person sprinkling *dust*, the trap door appears in its proper phase. The door can be lifted by anyone with a Strength of 10 or more. Beneath is a 20′-deep shaft into the catacombs beneath the town.

The trap door remains in phase for 24 hours before the gem and the *dust* are once more needed to bring it into being. If PCs didn't make this connection, Tooroot will quote the section of the scroll warning that the entrance appears "for a time." A smart party will monitor its time in the tomb and conserve the *dust of appearance* to get back out. A foolish party may be trapped inside until it meets Braxus (see area 31).

The catacombs are a series of interconnected caves discovered when the town's foundations were first dug. In those days the caves were explored, deemed too wet for storage or shelter, and then sealed up again. The caves were later used by cultists of Nergal as a secret meeting place and burial chamber. The cultists remembered the caves when they needed a cheap but secure resting place after Clarshh's execution. As a result, his sepulchre is located in these catacombs, as the PCs will discover.



18. Tunnel. The shaft from the surface is man-made and ends at an arched tunnel leading into the natural caves. Small round stones and a few larger rocks lie on the floor throughout the complex, but they don't impede movement or combat. Ceilings are 12′ high and doors are described individually.

Detect magic spells can provide an early warning for wary adventurers. A faint aura of necromantic magic pervades all areas in the complex, increasing as the party approaches the undead within.

19. Sealed Caves. Each of these large alcoves exists beneath a ruined building on the surface. When the houses were built the cellar excavations burst through to the caves below. Iron bars were then laid like rafters in each cave's ceiling to prevent subsidence. The underside of the bars is clearly visible from inside the alcoves, and they follow the dimensions of the surface structures rather closely. The ironmongery prevents digging from either direction.

20. Pool & Water Hazard. A 1′-deep pool circles the central rock pillar here, fed by rainwater seeping down from the flooded cellar of the butcher's shop (area 7). The pool is the cramped home of an immature crystal ooze that subsists on the occasional rat or frog, or anything that can eke out a short life in the dark

water. The ooze hasn't grown very fast because prey is so scarce. It cannot go north of this section because of the tightly fitting stone doors, or south, since the chasm bridge was destroyed (see area 4F below). Its statistics are reduced accordingly.

The ooze's pool still contains the scoured coins of a long-dead cultist: 10 gp, 6 sp, and 12 cp.

Immature crystal ooze: INT animal; AL N; AC 8; MV 1, swim 3; HD 2; hp 7; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8 (2d4); SA poison (reduced potency: save at +2 or be paralyzed); dissolve wood, cloth, and flesh; SD wooden weapons must save vs. acid or dissolve and break; immune to acid, cold, heat, or fire attacks; weapons inflict only 1 hp damage (plus magical bonus) per hit; SZ S (3'); ML 10; XP 420; MM/278 (Ooze/Slime/Jelly, modified).

21. Cell Block. The door to this section is made of stone, tightly fitted to its frame. Inside, steps lead down to a small block of prison cells. Each cell contains a bundle of rags and straw. The northernmost cell has a colony of green slime living on its ceiling. The slime drops onto anyone entering the cell.

A stairway leads down to the east from the cells to the shrine (area 22).

Green slime: INT non; AL N; AC 9; MV 0; HD 2; hp 10; THAC0 19; #AT 0; Dmg Nil; SA turn victim to green slime; SD immune to weapons and most spells; SZ S (4' diameter); ML 10; XP 65; MM/278 (Ooze/Slime/Jelly).

22. Evil Shrine. A pair of decrepit wooden doors bar entrance to this cave. They can be opened effortlessly, revealing a shrine to Nergal. PCs of good alignment feel uncomfortable in the evil aura of the shrine.

Black columns lead to an altar of basalt, cut with grooves to gather the blood of sacrificed victims.

Hanging on the left side of the altar is an oddly triangular knife with a mithril silver blade (worth 600 gp). Despite its superior workmanship, the sacrificial knife is a distinctive artifact of the cult, sure to attract attention if sold intact. To the right of the altar hangs a gold bowl (worth 600 gp). It too will attract cultists, their enemies, or the authorities if it surfaces on the open market. (Melted down, it is worth 400 gp).

Clerics of good alignment who take the trouble to neutralize the shrine by sprinkling it with holy water should be awarded 500 XP by the DM. Nergal's shrine can also be destroyed by smashing the block with a sledgehammer or by burning and rapidly cooling the stone using a bonfire and buckets of water.

23. Chasm. A 60'-deep chasm bisects the corridor here, the sound of running water coming from the depths below. Once an elaborate bridge of stalagmites (held together with *stone to mud* and *mud to stone* spells) spanned the gap, but it was broken and cast into the chasm a few years ago.

The shortest distance across the chasm PCs can discover is a 22'-wide leap. Only a PC with a *jump* spell can attempt such a feat. A grappling hook can catch the far side only if the first throw is successful, indicated by a roll of 99-00 on d%. Otherwise there are no protrusions to anchor on.

If PCs have neither magical means or climbing skills to get across the chasm, they may still be able to construct a makeshift bridge using timber salvaged from the stables, or harvested from trees on the surface. The ladder (area 4) may also help, though its weight may make the task of bringing it here difficult.

The stream that flows through the chasm comes from a pocket of elemental water that emerges under the foundations of the town. The cold, pure stream flows rapidly underground, emerging briefly at Braxus' throne (area 31, below) before heading off to join more ordinary streams on the mountainside.

PCs who fall into the chasm must make a Dexterity check to reduce damage by diving smoothly into the 10'-deep water. Success indicates 1d6 hp damage; failure indicates an awkward fall that inflicts 6d6 hp damage. Unless roped to a solid anchor, the victims are swept downstream 120' per round, taking an extra 1d4 hp damage from bumps and cuts. Three rounds later, they are deposited in front of Braxus' throne.

Don't tell players what becomes of companions swept away. The DM can communicate with them by passing notes. Refer to rules for "Holding Your Breath" on page 122 of the *PH* as necessary for armored PCs.

24. Rockfall. The treasure hunters are faced with the inconvenience of having to crawl over a rockfall. Tree roots dangle down over the pile of rubble, evidently the cause of the collapse.

Only one PC may safely crawl over the obstacle at a time, taking one melee round to reach the other side. PCs in a hurry (running away from a monster, for example) are 50% likely to become entangled in dangling roots. A PC snagged on the roots must spend a round extricating himself, while blocking the tunnel to friends. Crossing in haste also has a 50% chance to start a small avalanche, doing 1d3 hp damage and obliging the PC to spend one round getting back on level ground.

For each man hour spent picking stones out of the rockfall (possibly dumping them in the chasm at area 23) the chance of entanglement or slipping is reduced by 10%. (A single person working one hour is one "man hour." Two people toiling for an hour equals two man hours, and so on.)

25. Pitfall, Portcullis, and Magic Mouth. Anyone actively searching for traps has normal chances to find the covered pit in the floor of the tunnel (1-3 on 1d6 for a dwarf, 1-7 on 1d10 for a gnome, and the usual find traps percentage for a rogue). PCs hugging either corridor wall can bypass the pit safely.

Any PC walking on the trap must make a saving throw vs. paralysis or fall into the 10'-deep pit for 1d6 damage. Adding to his problems, the victim is attacked by the two animated skeletons lurking in the pit. Only one skeleton may attack at a time due to the confining pit walls.

The northern arm of this junction is barred by a portcullis that seems to be made of stone. In fact, water containing dissolved minerals has run down the bars for many years, encasing them in a thin sheet of stone. PCs will discover this as soon as any pressure is applied to a bar—the stone flakes off easily, revealing the rusted iron beneath. A PC's bend bars/lift gates percentage has a +10% bonus due to the deterioration of the portcullis.

As soon as a human, demihuman, or other humanoid touches the portcullis a *magic mouth* appears on a nearby wall and booms out:

"Beware and go no further lest ye be blasted! Turn back now or ye die!"

The *mouth*'s threat is hollow. The spell operates only once, and does not repeat itself if the bars are handled again. It was intended to scare away casual visitors, but apart from its message, nothing else happens.

Skeletons (2): INT non; AL N; AC 7;

MV 12; HD 1; hp 6, 4; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SD half damage from edged or piercing weapons; MR immune to *sleep, charm, hold,* and *fear* spells; SZ M (6' tall); ML special; XP 65 each; MM/315.

26. Zombie Guards. The door to this cave is stuck and takes some trouble to open (roll open doors at −5 penalty). The cave beyond stinks of rotting flesh. Three robed and hooded figures sit at a table opposite the door.

The three figures keep their hoods up. They are zombies, though they were once guards employed to shoot intruders who found their way into the embalming chamber (area 30). The zombies shamble slowly toward intruders to drive them off, but they no longer use the weapons provided for them in the guard room (area 27, below).

A vial of holy water does 2-8 hp damage to a zombie. The zombies may be turned by a cleric of any level.

Zombies (3): INT non; AL N; AC 8; MV 6; HD 2; hp 10, 9, 3; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SD immune to *sleep, charm,* hold, death magic, poisons, and cold-based spells; SZ M (6'); ML special; XP 65 each; MM/373.

27. Guard Room. This was once a guard room. Two loopholes look into the dark embalming chamber (area 30) but no door divides the rooms. The loop holes measure 6" wide by 18" high. The guards who kept a vigil here have been transformed into zombies by the magical nature of the catacombs and no longer may play an effective offensive part against intruders (see areas 30 and 26).

The guards' crossbows and scattered quarrels lie on the floor. The four light crossbows are warped and their strings are rotten, but the 40 quarrels are in remarkably good shape and are all usable.

28. Antechamber to Cultists' Tombs. The stony door to this room is reinforced with bands of iron, and, though a lock is evident, it easily opens outward. Inside is an octagonal chamber. On the floor are two crushed, distorted skeletons. To the east is a shallow alcove with a life-size statue of Nergal on a semicircular plinth.

This is the antechamber to the tombs of cultists (not Clarshh) hidden behind the statue. The floor is trapped with two small pressure pads, near the center of the chamber. If figures are being used, the DM should simply watch where players place them on the floorplan. Each PC stopping on the center or walking over it has a 10% cumulative chance of stepping on a pressure pad.

If figures aren't being used, each PC entering must make a Dexterity ability check. The first person to fail triggers the trap. The exercise can be repeated if the trap is avoided and PCs continue to walk about while it is armed.

Unless the door is spiked open, triggering the trap swings the entrance shut, locking it tight. On the same round a mechanical clanking echoes from above as the ceiling begins to descend. On the second round the ceiling is 6' above the floor. On the third it is 3' above the floor; on the fourth, 1'; and on the fifth round, it stops 1" from the floor. On the sixth round, it ascends again. The door unlocks when the ceiling returns to its proper height.

There are a number of ways to escape. One halfling or gnome can fit in the convex space north and south of the statue (up to two such small PCs may fit here). A PC spiking the door open will cause the trap to clank impotently—the ceiling cannot descend. One may also pull the black shield on the statue, causing the ceiling to ascend, the door to unlock, and the pressure pads to be neutralized. It also swings the plinth 90° counter-clockwise, opening a passage to area 30, below.

Anyone caught by the trap is slain, barring any magical means of escape. The two skeletons are those of minor cultists who "assisted" their superiors in the testing of the trap's proper working order. They have no valuables.

29. Cultists' Tombs. The favored of the local cult of Nergal were interred in these tombs after death. Clarshh is not among them—his tomb is more exclusive.

Each corpse was deposited in a niche at human chest height. Each 5' × 5' niche is 10' deep and sealed with a stone slab. A name appears on each slab, identifying the occupant. No dates are recorded on the 14 tombs lining the corridor. Adventurers opening the niches along the corridor find the remains of a cultist and (in most cases) some valuables. Working along the north wall, west to east, they find the following:

The first tomb has the name "Eldus"

written on it. Inside is an ancient skeleton. Among its rib-bones lies a thin gold necklace, worth 30 gp.

Niche two bears the name, "Kurg." The skeleton clutches a *footman's mace +1.*

The third slab is carved with the word, "Coblat." The corpse wears a finger ring worth 30 gp.

The fourth niche belongs to "Septurn." She was wearing a *robe of blending* when interred, which has withstood the passage of time.

Tomb five belongs to "Whartesh." Some broken pots in the niche once held coins. Piled among the fragments are 100 gp and 50 cp.

"Cortan" lies in niche number six. Only a few bony fragments bearing the marks of rats' teeth remain. Four gems (20 gp each) are buried with him.

"Miros" resting place is in number seven. The skeleton has a dry and brittle leather purse with 50 gp.

Working along the south wall from west to east the PCs find:

"Kabesh" lies in the first niche in the south wall. A *dagger +1* is in a scabbard by the skeleton.

The second tomb on this wall is marked "Quilick." Nothing of value seems to be here, but 2 pp are hidden inside the hollow skull.

Tomb three has "Enpure" carved on the sealing slab. A small box clutched in Enpure's bony fingers contains two potions of *healing.*

The fourth tomb is marked "Selltine." Only ashes remain inside, and Selltine was buried without any valuables.

Niche five was the repository of "Bernick's" remains. He has no valuables, but the slab shows signs of having been tampered with. (PCs may think the duo in area 28 were grave robbers, but the culprit lies in the last niche on this wall.)

The sixth niche has been tampered with—the slab lies broken in pieces on the floor. If reassembled the name "Yaldros" can be deciphered. The bones inside the tomb have been violently scattered and any treasures removed. The culprit is in niche seven.

The seventh and final niche has had the name "Mattsher" scratched out. The slab is intact but no longer sealed. Inside is Mattsher, a ghast that can't escape from the tomb area by itself. If his niche is opened, he will attack to defend his treasures.

Mattsher wears a silken coat worth 300 gp. Stashed in the back of his tomb home are a gold cup (150 gp) and a bag of 15 gems, worth 90 gp (×5), 75 gp (×6), 20 gp (×4).

Ghast: INT very; AL CE; AC 4; MV 15; HD 4; hp 18; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8; SA paralyzation by touch (including elves); SD carrion stench (save vs. poison or attack at −2 penalty), immune to *sleep* and *charm* spells; SZ M (6'); ML 14; XP 650; MM/131 (Ghoul).

30. Embalming Chamber. A faint chemical smell still hangs in the air of this dust-shrouded chamber. A bath ringed with a crystalline scum lies in the middle of the floor. A circle, typical of those used during magical incantations, is etched into the stone nearby. To the east is a table littered with scraps of cloth, threads, and surgical tools. Steps rise to a black curtain screening off an alcove to the east.

This chamber is where Clarshh's body was embalmed prior to burial. The internal organs were first removed, the cavities sewn up, then the body placed in a chemical bath that preserved it from further decay. Linen strips were wrapped about the corpse and sealed with resin. The body was then vouchsafed with prayers to Nergal and carried in procession to its final resting place.

In the southwest two loopholes look into the guard room (area 27). If PCs make enough noise, alerting the zombie guards at area 26 to their presence, they will notice movement behind the loop holes two rounds later. Putrid arms reach out through the slits, grappling any adventurers who come near. The event is frightening, but the zombies are easy to avoid because they no longer use the weapons they owned in life.

The alcove to the east contains a stone sarcophagus, its lid sealed with wires and leaden glyphs. This is a decoy to fool robbers who may believe they've discovered the main tomb. (A secret door in the wall east of the sarcophagus leads to the section of the catacombs where the body is actually secreted.)

PCs breaking any of the seals on the false sarcophagus do so with no apparent nasty results. The decayed wooden coffin inside crumbles to the touch; the bones within have a few scraps of clothing on them. Those examining the clothing should roll an Intelligence check to realize none of the scraps match the ones found on the table. The only treasure is a bag containing 150 gp lying in a corner of the coffin.

31. The Guardian of the Tomb. A secret door opens to an underground stream which runs through a natural cave. Stalactites hang from the ceiling, and stalagmites clutter the floor, but not enough to hinder movement (or provide cover).

Following the stream the adventurers reach a stone throne at the foot of some steps. The steps lead up and out of sight at the crypt (area 32). The throne obstructs passage from the cave to the crypt.

Seated on the throne is a skeletal figure, clad in a brown robe. Its bare skull and bony hands are clearly visible. From 30' away, twin red fires can be discerned in the figure's eye-sockets. This is Braxus, the guardian alluded to in Sereen's scroll. The monster is a crypt thing set here to prevent anyone less than a 14th-level priest of Nergal from entering the sepulchre (area 32). Braxus was manufactured using a skeleton and a scroll with a *create crypt thing* spell after Clarshh was interred.

The monster does not move until an intruder enters the cavern, whether that intruder is walking, climbing, flying, in *gaseous form,* or even *polymorphed* into another creature. Braxus is particularly intrigued if PCs enter via the stream (or are washed down it) and will fish out anyone who needs help simply to look at them out of curiosity.

It has been decades since Braxus was placed here. The crypt thing has human intelligence which, while not exactly giving him a craving for company, does allow him to communicate with visitors before deciding what to do with them.

Braxus is to keep intruders out of the sepulchre (area 32), but he need not attack immediately if no one goes there. PCs may even leave unscathed as long as they don't attempt to enter the sepulchre.

If questioned, Braxus can speak, though initially with a croaking, whispering voice (from disuse). Further speech reveals the monster has a deep, pleasant voice.

The crypt thing has no memories before the day of his creation. It knows it was created using a scroll, and that the persons so doing were worried the magic might not work. They were anxious when the skeleton first moved, but seemed relieved when it obeyed their commands.

Though communicative and actually

quite pleasant to speak with, Braxus is single-minded in his purpose as guardian of the crypt and cannot be persuaded to abandon his duty. He has a magical link with the crypt—if the PCs manage to bypass him and set foot inside the sepulchre itself, Braxus knows immediately and goes there to attack with a *mass teleportation* spell. He can also use this attack if threatened, charged, or fired on by an opponent.

If adventurers somehow enter the crypt, loot it, and escape before Braxus can get there (an unlikely but possible event) the monster's duty ends and it falls lifeless to the ground.

Anyone attacked by Braxus' magic is allowed a saving throw vs. spell. Inanimate objects in the target's possession are *teleported* automatically. Objects thrown or hurled at the monster are allowed a saving throw on the PC's own saving throw table, or those also vanish. Victims of the attack all appear instantly on the surface. The DM can determine the effects of *teleported* grenadelike missiles and similar attacks.

The spell can be cast only once on any group of adventurers. If the PCs split up into smaller groups, one entering the cave and another staying out, the second group may still be *teleported* if they later enter and meet Braxus.

Those who make their saving throws, or who return to the cave, are physically attacked by the crypt thing. Braxus uses a clawing attack that does 1d8 hp damage.

Only magical weapons can hit the monster. The crypt thing cannot be turned, but holy water does 2d4 hp damage per vial. The PCs may find the water in the fountain (area 11) useful in this respect.

If destroyed, Braxus collapses into fragments, sighing in relief as he goes.

Braxus (crypt thing): INT very; AL N; AC 3; MV 12; HD 6; hp 39; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SA *teleport* (once per party of adventurers); SD +1 or better weapons needed to hit, immune to *charm, hold, sleep,* and turning; SZ M (6′ tall); ML 18; XP 975; MM/51.

32. Clarshh's Sepulchre. This is the real tomb of the priest, Clarshh. Steps rise to a simple cave in which a plain sarcophagus rests. It is sealed with wires and glyphs similar to those in the embalming chamber (area 30). At the foot of the sarcophagus (to the west) is an urn containing 1,200 gp. At the hea of the sarcophagus (to the east) is an urn with 2,000 sp.

Thieves who make a find traps roll while checking the sarcophagus notice magical *glyph of warding.* It can be safely erased with a successful remove traps roll at half the thief's normal percentage. Otherwise a *dispel magic* vs. 14th-level of magic is needed.

The trap can be deliberately triggere safely from a distance of 11′ or more. Simply breaking the other seals first, then using a lever from the safe distance, will set off the *glyph* harmlessly.

If triggered, the *glyph* blinds everyon in a 10′ radius of the sarcophagus, unless they make a successful saving throw vs. spell. Followers of Nergal are immune to this effect.

Inside the sarcophagus is a wooden coffin in a good state of repair. Ceramic jars between the coffin and the sarcophagus hold Clarshh's vital organs, removed at the embalming stage. They have been pickled in a briny chemical. Clarshh is mummified inside the coffin.

Continued on page 3

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A SERENADE BEFORE SUPPER

BY ANDREW VEEN

A melody sure to ruin your appetite

Artwork by Eric Anderson

Andrew Veen lives in London and was inspired to write this adventure by the cover of DRAGON® Magazine #191, which features the illustration used here as the sign outside "The Wayfarer's Rest." This is his first appearance in DUNGEON® Magazine.

"A Serenade before Supper" is an AD&D® game mini-adventure for 4-6 player characters of levels 3-5 (about 20 total levels). At least one member of the party should have either a magical weapon or a weapon crafted from cold iron. It may heighten the entertainment (for the Dungeon Master), if the PCs have encountered lycanthropes on some previous occasion and learned the value of silver weapons in combatting such monsters. They will be in for some nasty surprises if they try to use them in this adventure.

Keep a record of the PC's ability scores, saving throws, and all relevant modifiers, because all ability checks and saving throws in this adventure should be made secretly. Inform the players of the effects as events unfold.

The setting is the Iron Wood, a small forest about 50 miles west of the city of Verbobonc in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® fantasy setting. The adventure is best played as a random encounter, with the reason for the PC's journey left to the dictates of each individual campaign.

For the Player Characters

Read the following to the players:

> For the last week, Veluna and western Furyondy have been drenched by torrential rains. The mighty Velverdyva River has burst its banks and is now completely unnavigable. River traffic is at a standstill as captains wait for the flood waters to subside and for dangerous flotsam to wash downstream. Left with little alternative, you must take the overland route between Devarnish and Verbobonc.
>
> Your journey on this little-used trade route has been a miserable experience. Unrelenting rains have lashed you from the moment of your departure, and you have spent several uncomfortable nights by the side of the road. Last night you camped on the edge of the Iron Wood, whose trees seemed to await your arrival with an unnatural brooding silence.

Your spirits lifted this morning. The rain clouds had finally withdrawn, leaving a slate gray, overcast sky hanging over your sodden heads. Since breaking camp and following the muddy trade road into the silent woods you have made good time. It is now early evening. A half an hour ago you watched the sun set in a final defiant blaze of orange and red. Dusk's ebbing light flees from the woods around you as night slowly draws its shadowy cloak over the land.

Among the dense stands of roan-woods, yarpicks, and ipp trees, a thick mist is forming. Long tendrils slowly snake out to obscure the road. Visibility steadily worsens, and your damp clothing provides scant protection against the night's growing chill. The mist soon curdles into a heavy fog, making further travel tonight difficult.

Suddenly, ahead in the swirling fog, you see a large signpost standing near the edge of the road. You urge your mounts closer to the sign to read its inscription. Burnt in the wood in the common tongue are the following words: *THE WAYFARER'S REST. Hot Food. Warm Beds. 100 yards.* A small plaque attached to the base of the sign swings slowly in the gentle breeze that whispers through the wood. The plaque's inscription simply reads "Open." The signpost points to an avenue of trees leading north. Its well-used track soon disappears, swallowed up by the fog. In the distance you can just see the soft, welcoming glow of the inn's lights. The prospects of dry bedding and a warm fire beckon.

A long wolf howl shatters the silence of the night. Your horses start, then whinny and rear. A break appears in the cloud cover overhead. For a long moment you are bathed in the soft light of Oerth's second moon, Celene the Handmaiden. Then, just as suddenly as it appeared, the Handmaiden is gone, swallowed up by the swirling fog. Another wolf howl pierces the night—much louder and much closer!

Let the players assume what they will about the mists; the party has not been transported to Ravenloft, the Demiplane of Dread. Of course, if they think otherwise, so much the better.

For the Dungeon Master

The Iron Wood is situated roughly halfway between the free city of Verbobonc to the east, and the walled Velunese city of Devarnish to the northwest. To the north are the banks of the mighty Velverdyva River and to the south the legendary Kron Hills. A little-used trade route runs between Devarnish and Verbobonc, cutting through the heart of the wood.

Most merchants prefer the safety and speed of the river to the more perilous overland route. However, some still use the overland route to avoid the high costs of river transport. Whatever the means of transport, most travelers must spend at least one night in the wood.

About 10 years ago Uther Muldoon, a moderately successful adventurer from Furyondy, retired to the Iron Wood with his family. He built a small inn 100 yards off the trade route. Uther called it *The Wayfarer's Rest*, and though it never made more than a modest income for the Muldoons, Uther's dream of a peaceful and tranquil retirement was fulfilled.

However, the Muldoons idyllic existence came to an abrupt end on a dark night three months ago. On that night, their guests for the evening were a wolfwere and three jackalweres posing as normal travelers. These evil creatures had stopped for a meal, but the dish they wanted was not on the Muldoon's menu. Although the were-creatures slew all the Muldoons, Uther gave a good account of himself, slaying one of the jackalweres with his magical sword. Sin-swithel, the wolfwere leader of the evil band, claimed the sword for his own.

During the feasting that followed, Sin-swithel hit upon a fiendish plan. Why should he and his jackalweres pursue prey all their lives? Why not let the food come to them? They could live quite comfortably at the inn. Whenever they were hungry, they could simply open up for business. When they were not, they could close up shop and enjoy the same idyllic existence the Muldoons had. Precautions would have to be taken regarding just who they had as "guests," but the beginnings of a promising plan were there.

For the last three months the evil trio has preyed on travelers passing through the Iron Wood. They have been careful to avoid drawing attention to themselves by picking weaker wayfarers as their victims. Thus far their presence has gone unnoticed. Such disappearances are not unusual. After all, who misses the odd adventuring party that fails to return? So far the trio has been very successful and Sin-swithel has acquired a *cloak of the bat*, courtesy of a young mage from Keoland. Tonight is the fourth night of Needfest, and once again the were-creatures are hungry. Maybe the PCs will provide an appetizing snack!

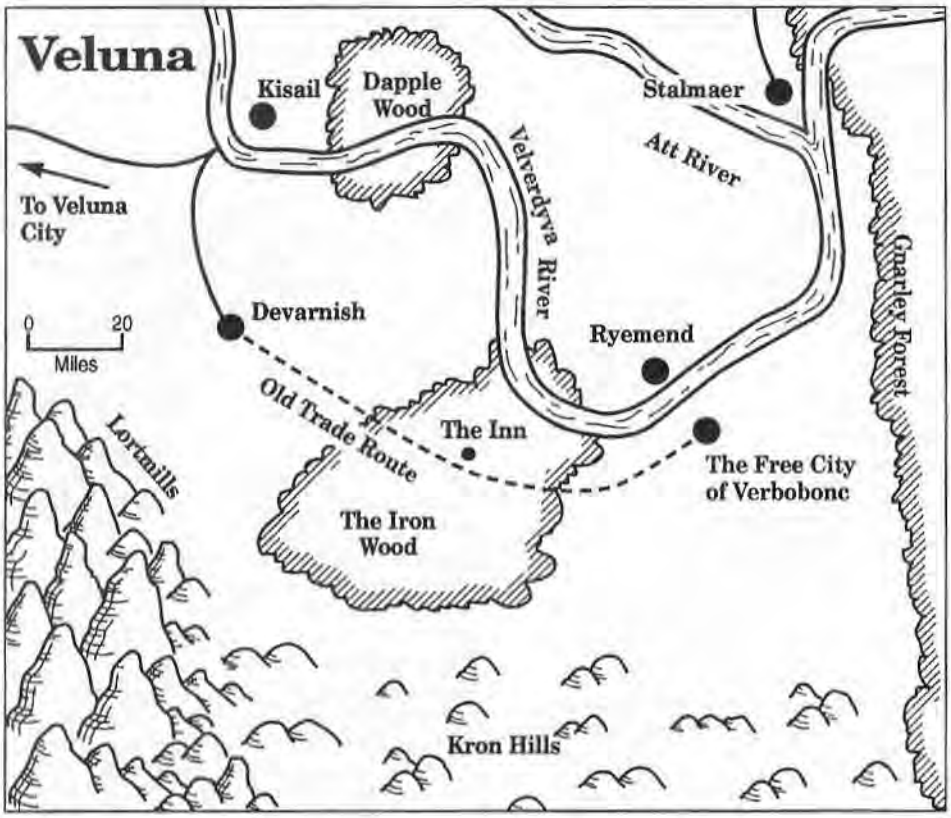
The trio chooses its victims in a two stage process. Sin-swithel uses his magical cloak to observe possible prey on the road while remaining unnoticed, and he opens the inn for likely candidates. When assessing potential victims, Sin-swithel limits his parties to no more than six individuals. He determines the nature of the party by both its equipment and its behavior. If the travelers are not a caravan of merchants or a band of relatively inexperienced adventurers, he will look elsewhere. He pays particular attention to armor, clothes, and weaponry. He avoids parties whose warriors are predominantly armored in plate mail or better armor, or are bristling with weapons. He also avoids adventurers who wear clothing of exceptional quality.

At the inn the PCs undergo the final selection stage. The jackalweres subject them to a subtle but in-depth cross-examination designed to gauge their true power. The jackalweres are not easily fooled, and their questions are designed to reinforce the impression that they are no more than curious innkeepers.

The Monsters

Sin-swithel is the biggest, meanest wolfwere the PCs are ever likely to meet. He stands a full 7' tall in his true form, and his imposing personality ensures his position as leader of the evil band. He is a consummate actor and an able musician. Depending on the number of males and females in the party, he will choose between his two favorite disguises: a tall and very attractive male or female half elven bard. Sin-swithel never runs from a fight and he carries Uther's sword. The weapon is inscribed with the word "Moonbane" along its length in the old Suel script.

Sin-swithel/Sindaria, wolfwere: INT exceptional; AL CE; AC 1 (cloak); MV 15, fly 15 (B); HD 5+1; hp 41; THAC0 15 (bite) and 14 or 12 (Moonbane);



#AT 2; Dmg 2-12 (bite) and 1-10+1 (sword); SA singing causes lethargy (*slow* for 1d4+1 rounds); SD iron or +1 weapon to hit; SZ M; ML 14; XP 2,000; MM/363; *cloak of the bat*, Moonbane (*two-handed sword +1, +3 vs. lycanthropes and shapechangers*), lute.

Jydde and Hekkyl are Sin-swithel's craven pair of fawning side-kicks. Initially they were sceptical about his whole plan, but the recent successes and Sin-swithel's threats have silenced their scepticism. However, unlike their leader, they appreciate the fine art of living to feed another day. If matters get out of hand they will flee to save their own skins.

Jydde and Hekkyl have disguised themselves as Uther and Lystra Muldoon. Indeed Hekkyl has taught herself to cook from Lystra's cookbook. On a few occasions, when the prey was more powerful than anticipated, the evil trio have entertained for an evening without feeding, but such occasions are rare.

Jydde and **Hekkyl**, jackalweres (2): INT very; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 4; hp 31, 28; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SA gaze causes *sleep*; SD iron or +1 weapon to hit; SZ M; ML 12; XP 420 each; MM/210.

Prelude to a Serenade

On the Road. Sin-swithel is the source of the wolf howls. He has been trailing and observing the PCs, using his magical cloak, for the last hour. He hopes to shepherd the PCs toward the inn with his eerie howls, a tactic that has worked in the past. However, if the party elects to spend the night on the road, Sin-swithel will send the Pack to visit them during the night.

The Pack. The Pack is a motley collection of worgs, wolves, and jackals drawn to the vicinity by the were-creatures. They are vicious and daring because of their shapeshifting allies. Sin-swithel uses the Pack as a last resort to persuade cautious travelers that a night at the inn would be safer than a night in the woods.

Worgs (5): INT low; AL NE; AC 6; MV 18; HD 3+3; hp 27, 23, 21, 19, 18; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SZ M; ML 11; XP 120; MM/362 (Wolf).

Wolves (5): INT low; AL NE; AC 7; MV 18; HD 3; hp 18, 17 (×2), 15, 10; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 2-5; SD +1 vs. *charm*; SZ M; ML 10; XP 120; MM/362.

Jackals (5): INT semi; AL NE; AC 7; MV 12; HD ½; hp 4, 3 (×2), 2 (×2); THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2; SZ S; ML 8; XP 7; MM/241-2 (Mammal).

On the Track. No doubt the party will head along the track at quite a pace, spurred on by the feeling that something dreadful is stalking them. The DM should play on the PC's paranoia by describing brief glimpses of furtive lupine shapes in the fog.

> You can see no more than 20′ in the heavy fog. Your progress along the road is brought to an abrupt halt, and your skittish mounts come to a dead stop and rear in fright. Two large jackals bar the path ahead, their heads bent low to the ground sniffing the soil. At your arrival, they quickly raise their angular heads and fix you with intent stares. Then they turn and trot off the track, disappearing into the swirling fog like ghosts in the night.

These are the two largest jackals from the Pack. After frightening the PCs, they avoid combat, running into the woods. If pursued at a run, the Pack moves in to defend them, gaining surprise with a +5 bonus. After one round of attacks, the Pack scatters in all directions.

At the Glade. If the PCs press on, the track suddenly opens up into the secluded glade containing the inn.

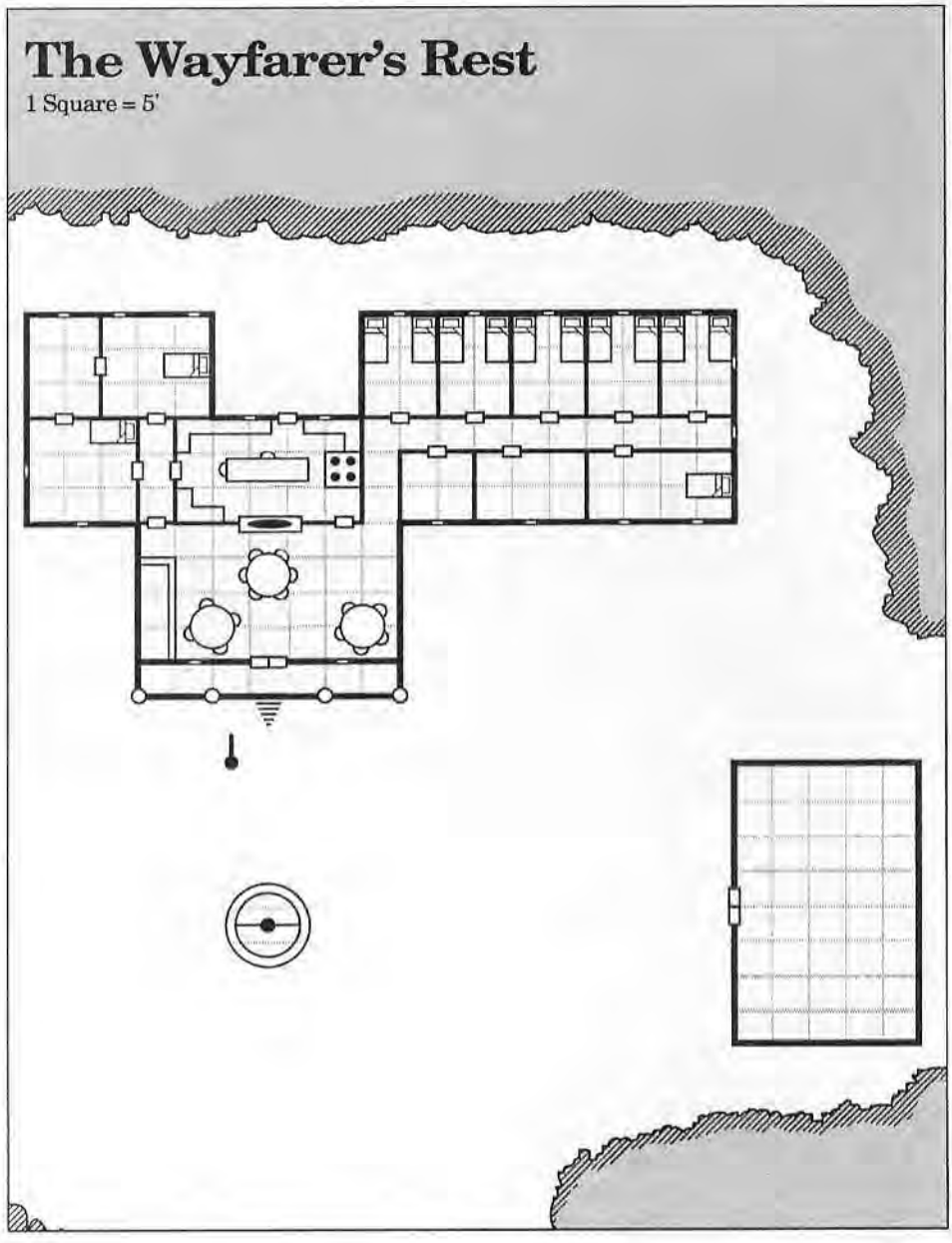
> The narrow tree-lined track you have been following suddenly opens up into a wide glade awash in a sea of fog. A squat inn sits in the middle of the clearing facing you. Warm light spills from its windows and smoke pours from a stone chimney atop a well-thatched roof. A large painted sign hanging from a post in front of the inn screeches as it swings in the wind. You can make out a well to the left, and off to the right is an old barn.
>
> As you coax your mounts into the glade, the door to the inn swings open and a tall, lithe, well-muscled man steps out onto the porch, his body silhouetted by the light within. The winter wind whips his long dark hair into a chaotic flurry as he raises his hand in greeting, "Hail and well met young wayfarers. I am Uther Muldoon, owner of this establishment. It is too cold to be jawing out doors, so stable your horses in yonder barn and join my wife and I within as soon as you can."

Jydde watches the party lead their horses to the barn, then returns to the comfort of the inn. The barn is a secure affair; anyone who makes an observation proficiency check (see *The Complete Thief's Handbook*, page 19) notices that the barn contains an inordinately large amount of riding tackle. The well is ordinary, and the 3′ × 2′ wooden sign bearing the inn's name also bears an elaborate painting of a silver haired gray elf playing a harp. The elf is seated against a tree, and the beasts of the forest are his audience: small rodents, two squirrels, a rabbit, a racoon, a wild cat, a badger, a hedgehog, a deer, a dove, and a large silver-grey wolf.

Inside the Inn. Uther wanted to call the inn *Belvor's Banner*, but his wife persuaded him to choose the less provocative title of *The Wayfarer's Rest*. However, Uther got his own way with the inn's decor. Read or paraphrase the following:

> The inside of the inn looks more like a Furyondian war museum than a wilderness retreat. Military paraphernalia, banners, uniforms, equipment, old maps, and even older weapons decorate the walls. Uther is, it seems, a true patriot. Some of the exhibits are obviously trophies from campaigns against the Horned Society and Iuz, while others are from hunting expeditions all over the Flanaess. A large map covers the wall behind the bar. It depicts the western portion of the continent and shows in intricate detail all the campaigns and battles fought in the Greyhawk Wars.
>
> Uther and his wife are waiting behind the bar. Both are tall with angular features and high cheekbones. However that is where the similarity ends. He is dark-eyed, dark-haired, and weather-beaten. She has a long cascade of red hair and haunting emerald green eyes.
>
> Uther gives you a broad grin and says, "This is my wife Lystra. What can we get for a rain-soaked and saddle-weary band of scoundrels such as yourselves?"

Jydde and Hekkyl play the part of innkeepers with well-practiced skill. If the PCs mention the wolf howls, Jydde tells them that wolves are quite common in the woods. Although he has killed one or two in his time (he indicates the relevant trophies), none have ever bothered him at the inn.

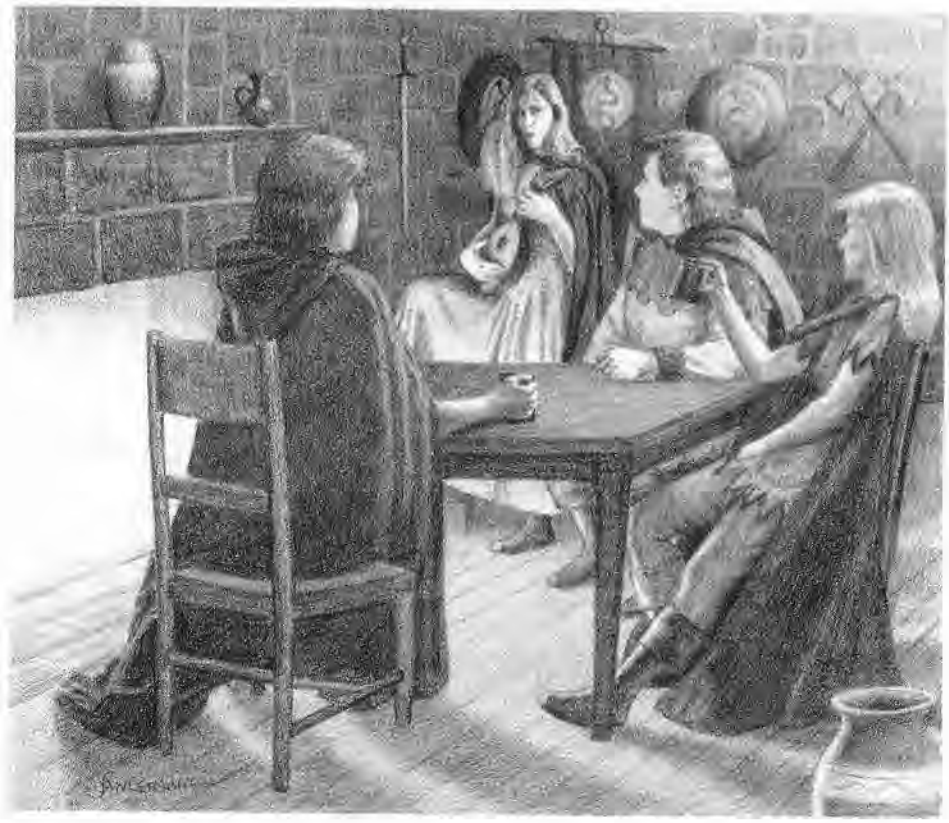


Hekkyl seats the party at the table nearest the fire and informs them that supper will be served within the hour. The PCs can choose from pheasant or wild boar, and drink is available at standard prices. The jackalweres try to gauge the power of the party by questioning them about their adventures and about any magic items they may have found during their travels.

Playing the part of jovial, concerned innkeepers, they also seek to persuade the PCs to change out of their wet clothes and leave their armor and weapons in their rooms to dry. Uther offers to shine their armor ("Just like the days when I was on campaign with the Earl"), and Lystra offers to dry their cloaks and clothes by the kitchen fire ("Now, dear, don't bore our visitors with your long-winded tales!").

Singing for his Supper

When the PCs have settled in a little, Sin-swithel arrives. No matter what form he has chosen, he wears loose-fitting, brightly-colored clothes and a



cloak the color of midnight. A lute hangs on his hip, and he carries Moonbane unsheathed. He stands on the threshold of the inn, gives his audience a winning smile and remarks that "The wolves are abroad tonight." He saunters across to the bar to "make arrangements for the night" with Jydde. He then makes his way to the only remaining table and sits facing the PCs. Almost as soon as he is seated, Sin-swithel/Sindaria starts to flirt with the most attractive PC of the opposite sex. At first, these overtures are quite innocuous, but they become progressively more and more outrageous: beginning with simple compliments, then kissing a hand when introduced, offering to write a poem in the PC's honor, and putting himself at his target's service.

Once the evil trio have decided that the PCs are on the menu the following arranged events occur:

- Sin-swithel's escalating flirtations with the chosen PC culminate in him offering to buy the party a round of drinks. He considers it an honor, because, as he puts it, "I want to put you in my debt, my dear, as my heart is already indebted to you." Then he proposes a toast to "the fire in those eyes."
- After the toast, he asks the chosen PC if he can serenade her or him before supper. He will not take no for an answer. If the PCs insist on silence the innkeepers will give Sin-swithel permission to sing. "After all," they say, "it's rare enough that we get any entertainment in these parts."
- As the two jackalweres approach the PC's table to refresh the round of drinks, Sin-swithel plucks the first notes of a slow love song on his lute. A bard can recognize the melody as "Steadfast Heart," a traditional Furyondian melody. Only a bard familiar with wolfweres will perceive the attack for what it is. Underlying the familiar song Sin-swithel begins his singing attack.
- The song is a signal to the jackalweres to use their gaze attacks on two unsuspecting warrior PCs, and they do so as they distribute the drinks to the party during the next round.

Secretly roll saving throws for all the PCs, telling those affected that the peaceful notes of the tune slowly and effortlessly lull them into a restful and lethargic torpor. Next, roll saving throws for the jackalwere's gaze attacks. The three shapeshifters now assume their true forms (this takes one round). Tell the PCs to roll for surprise. At this point, the PCs should be screaming in terror and quite rightly so, for the danger has come from where they may have least expected it—their friendly hosts.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs survive they can learn most of the background of this adventure from Uther's diary, which is stored (along with his mail shirt) in a trunk in the innkeeper's bedroom. An obvious change in handwriting shows that Jydde has added his own gruesome account of the last three months to the diary. Out back are the grisly remains of the trio's past victims. Jackals from the Pack scavenge among the bones and disappear into the woods as soon as the PCs emerge from the inn. If the PCs give the unfortunate travelers a proper funeral (a mass burial or funeral pyre would suffice), give each PC who helps a 100 XP bonus.

Behind the bar is a locked chest (the key is hidden in the wolfwere's left boot). The chest contains a potion of *ESP*, a scroll with a *strength* spell on it, 366 gp, 106 sp, and 207 cp.

If the jackalweres got away they are probably still running. The PCs should draw consolation from the knowledge that they have freed the wood from a truly insidious evil.

The PCs are now left with an unoccupied and ownerless inn. There are no title deeds for the inn in Uther's chest. Early entries in his diary confirm that the Muldoons have no living relatives and that neither Veluna nor Verbobonc have laid claim to the Iron Wood. As a consequence, Uther was able to set up shop without buying the land his inn is built on. The PCs can likewise assert ownership over the inn without fear of opposition, but it is unlikely that they will find a buyer for such a remote establishment. The PCs may want to use the inn as a base to make the Iron Wood a safer place to travel, eventually establishing themselves as lords of the wood. This could spark off a political dispute between Veluna and Verbobonc as both nations lay territorial claims to the newly revitalized trade route through the Iron Wood. Ω

Continued from page 31

PCs may be wary of the mummy, but it isn't undead and does not burn.

The corpse is heavily bound with bandages, which must be cut to obtain the remaining treasure. Beneath the wraps covering the chest is a breast plate of solid gold, inlaid with precious stones in complex patterns. It is valued at 1,000 gp. Among the bandages along the torso are 15 gemstones worth 500 gp (×3), 300 gp (×7), and 100 gp (×5).

Wrapped tightly in the right hand is a small cube ¾" on a side. This is the *cube of force* sought by Sereen. If PCs try it out for themselves, details of the device can be found on page 165 of the *DMG*.

If the adventurers strip the corpse of its coverings they reveal multiple arrow wounds inflicted by Clarshh's executioners.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs reach the sepulchre quickly, without first exploring the rest of the complex, they should be allowed to visit these areas if they now desire. The "take" will increase a bit as they gather the treasures secreted there.

However, if they decide to cut their losses and move out directly (or if they have explored all areas of the tomb), they can return to the entrance. It will have disappeared if more than 24 hours have elapsed since they entered. The gem and the *dust of appearance* will be needed to reach the trap door once more. If the *dust* is used up, the PCs may either be *teleported* out by Braxus or, if the DM is especially kind, they may use the *cube of force* to float down the stream to further underground adventures.

Sereen invites all the adventurers into his wagon while the loot is being counted. The arcane sticks to the agreement: he keeps 80% of all monetary treasure recovered and the *cube of force*. The party can haggle with him over gems, jewellery, or other noncash artifacts recovered, as he didn't specify these in the contract. Sereen exchanges any item for 50% of its cash value in gold if PCs want to sell.

Sereen will examine and identify any magical weapons recovered, but they are the property of the finder. He offers to buy the weapon for gold equal to five times its XP value. If this offer is refused, he doesn't press the issue.

Sereen expects the adventurers to escort him back to civilization and return the borrowed magical weapons before he will pay them their flat fee. If they refuse, he will hire additional adventurers to recover the weapons from the PCs.

The DM can add a 500 to 1,000 XP story award to those responsible for recovering the *cube of force*. Those who fail to deliver it gain no story experience points.

Further Adventures

If the DM has a difficult adventure in mind following this one, he may have Sereen offer the magical weapons for sale to the PCs at five times their XP value in gold. (Experience point values for magical weapons can be found in the *DMG*.) Otherwise Sereen already has customers for these weapons, so they aren't available to party members.

New adventures may arise as a direct consequence of visiting Clarshh's sepulchre. Selling the religious items found in the catacombs may alert paladins, good-aligned priesthoods, and other parties to the fact that PCs have visited there.

Enemies of the cult may mistake the PCs for ex-members, or the offspring of cultists, now selling off their possessions. They may attack the adventurers, believing them to be raising funds for the followers of Nergal.

If the cultists hear of the artifacts' reappearance, they may seek revenge on the PCs for defiling Clarshh's tomb. This scenario provides the making of a set of arch-enemies. Alternatively, the mercenary cultists may plunder other tombs of their past members to fund new cult activities, and they may call on the PCs (possibly in disguise) to assist them.

Sereen might also reappear. He is well-traveled, and has many contacts, perhaps even some on other worlds or planes. If the party wants certain riddles explained or needs an authoritative history of a legendary item, Sereen will be a source of good information—for a suitable financial consideration.

On the other hand, the arcane may have taken offense or been insulted by the adventurers while they explored Clarshh's tomb. If so, they may fall afoul of the arcane at a later, but very inconvenient, date. Sereen's retribution will take a subtler form than physical attack or kidnapping. The DM can make up some suitable redress for the affront to Sereen's dignity.

Spells of the Arcane

Arcane Runes (Alteration)
4th-level Wizard Spell

Range: Touch
Components: V,S,M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: Special
Area of Effect: Parchment or Book
Saving Throw: None

When this is used a wizard can inscribe a message or longer text, hiding it invisibly within a scroll, book, or tome. A user may write a warning within a large mundane or magical text, send a letter with secret information hidden between the lines, or even write an entire book within another volume.

Arcane runes are similar to the 1st-level wizard spell, *wizard mark*, but do not show up when a *detect magic* spell is used. They can be seen with *true seeing* or by anyone casting *read arcane runes*. The race of arcane can read and write *arcane runes* instinctively; they are the only people who can do so without specific training.

The material components of this spell are a pinch of dried and powdered lemon and a stylus. No ink is necessary. The caster must mouth the words softly as the verbal component. In longer texts, a single *arcane runes* spell can be used, the casting time ending when the caster closes the book or scroll he is working on.

Read Arcane Runes (Divination)
4th-level Wizard Spell

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

Using a *read arcane runes* spell, a wizard can decipher the secret writing hidden in a mundane or magical text by means of an *arcane runes* spell. Deciphering does not necessarily impart understanding. If the user is not an arcane he must use this spell even to peruse texts already deciphered, unlike a *read magic* spell. Texts to be referred to often are usually transcribed from *arcane runes* into common or some other easily read language.

The spell's material components are a small candle and a hand lens. The candle is lit and held behind the sheet of paper or parchment so that its light shines through. The wizard looks through the lens and reads the runes aloud.

Ω

ELEXA'S ENDEAVOR

BY CHRISTOPHER PERKINS

"Have fun storming the castle"

Artwork by Charlie Parker
Poster map by Michael Scott

Chris writes: "Michael Scott designed an amazing poster map for my adventure "Them Apples" in issue #48. When I heard that DUNGEON® Magazine had another one of Michael's maps in inventory—but no adventure to accompany it—I jumped at the chance to write a module around the map. The task proved far more challenging than I imagined . . . and I have a pretty good imagination!"

"Elexa's Endeavor" is a D&D® adventure designed for 4-6 player characters of levels 4-7 (about 30 total levels). At least one thief and one magic-user (or elf) is required, and the party should be predominantly Lawful in alignment. The number of magical items in the party should be relatively low (about 6-8 items total, preferably minor items or weapons). The Dungeon Master will need a copy of the D&D *Rules Cyclopedia* (RC) and the *Creature Catalog* (CC).

DMs wishing to adapt this adventure for their AD&D® campaigns are encouraged to read the *Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure* boxed set. Most of the monsters in the D&D *Creature Catalog* now appear in the AD&D *MYSTARA®* setting; the revised statistics for these monsters are given in the MYSTARA MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® appendix.

Although this module is designed for a generic D&D setting, the DM should change the names of people and places to conform to his own campaign.

Adventure Synopsis

While staying in the quaint rural town of Keswig, the PCs are approached by a troubled young woman named Elexa Justheart. Elexa has just returned from the Galhanor Crusades—a war fought against giants and humanoids in the distant Galhanor Mountains. After serving six months as a cleric in a series of major battles, she recently arrived home to find her uncle's castle occupied by evil brigands.

Elexa's Uncle Harkon owns the title to most of the land south of Keswig. His small, lakeside keep was, until recently, maintained and garrisoned by four demos magen. These beings were ideal protectors, requiring neither sleep nor sustenance. Unfortunately, their lack of personality made them poor companions, and when Elexa left for the war, Harkon felt lonely in his small castle. His wife, Kate, died many years ago, and Harkon had no children to keep

him company. In his isolation, he and the magen were unprepared to deal with the brigands.

Five adventures-turned-brigands currently occupy Harkon's keep. They have decided to make the castle their headquarters for future exploits in the region while waiting for the rest of their band to arrive. The other brigands are en route from a distant city, where they successfully helped one of their leaders escape imprisonment.

Elexa suspects her uncle is held in the castle dungeon, but she is ill-equipped to deal with the brigands alone. She does not know how many brigands hold the keep, or about the reinforcements on the way. The brigands within the castle have agreed to release Harkon in exchange for a ransom of 5,000 gp (money Elexa does not have). Even if Elexa could pay the ransom, the treacherous brigands have no intention of honoring any agreement with her.

The PCs must sneak into the castle and rescue Elexa's uncle before the brigands harm him. The keep is built on the edge of a lake and has only one prominent entrance. Moreover, the brigands have used a *scroll of defense* (a unique magical item they found in the castle) to create a magical shield around the structure, effectively barring intrusion. Jarrow, the wizard who created the scroll and the castle's magical guardians, never imagined that it might fall into evil hands.

Elexa thinks Jarrow might be inclined to lend assistance and provide a way to negate the scroll's effect. At the very least, he may offer to help the PCs enter the castle unnoticed and rescue Harkon from the brigands' clutches.

Unfortunately, Jarrow the wizard is no longer alive. His tower is intact, but its contents are guarded by magical constructs. If the PCs overcome the guardians, they can retrieve several useful items from Jarrow's tower, including his *crystal ball,* several potions, and a *rod of cancellation* (the only device capable of negating the magical shield around Harkon's keep).

The brigands have enough food and drink to sustain them for a week, but Elexa has no desire to let them hold the castle that long, for fear they may harm her uncle. Though the keep is filled with books and items of sentimental value to Harkon and his niece, Elexa has little to offer the PCs as a reward except a few family heirlooms.

For the Players

The adventure begins when Elexa Justheart approaches the PCs. Read the following text:

> While visiting the rural town of Keswig, you are met by a young woman wearing chain mail and a white tabard. Emblazoned on her tabard is a green wreath, the symbol of a clerical order. The woman is young but haggard, and her sunken eyes are dark with mystery. As she approaches, you notice a slight limp in her stride. From the flecks of grit on her armor and clothing you assume she has seen battle.
>
> "Sorry to trouble you," she says. "I was told that I might find adventurers here. My name is Elexa Justheart. I am a cleric of the Healing Order."
>
> "I have returned from the Crusades at Gulhanor only to learn that brigands have seized my uncle's castle and taken him captive. I have neither the money nor the desire to pay their ransom. I need someone to help rescue my uncle and his castle from the invaders' clutches. I was told you might be interested."

If the PCs express no interest in helping Elexa, she apologizes for disturbing them and leaves. As far as she is concerned, they were her best hope for success.

A retired mason named Haldred approaches the PCs and, having overheard their conversation, reprimands the party for turning away a cleric of the Healing Order. All three of the mason's sons are fighters in the Crusades, and all owe their lives to the clerics of that order. Haldred offers the party 750 gp to help Elexa Justheart. If they still refuse to help, Haldred leaves in disgust.

If the PCs agree to help Elexa save her uncle and his castle, a look of relief crosses her face. Read or paraphrase the following:

> "Although I have no money to pay you, my uncle's castle contains many family heirlooms, and I would part with a few of them. Your willingness to help is most appreciated. I will not forget this show of generosity, nor will my uncle."

Elexa was raised by her uncle after her parents died. She began preparing for the clergy at Uncle Harkon's behest, after Elexa's aunt, also a cleric, died. Elexa joined the Crusades six months ago. After three months of tending the king's armies, she was free to return home. Instead, she elected to remain on the march. Three months later, Elexa was injured at the hands of a fire giant and was dismissed by the king's general, who did not wish to see her harmed further.

Elexa Justheart (human cleric): AC 3; C5; hp 24; MV 90' (30'); THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 11, I 13, W 17, D 14, C 15, Ch 15; ML 10; AL L; *chain mail +1, mace +2,* holy symbol, clerical scroll (*cure light wounds* ×3). Skills: bravery (W), ceremony (W), healing (I +1), nature lore (I).

Spells: *cure light wounds* (×2), *bless, know alignment.*

Elexa is 20 years old with fair skin and dark hair. She stands 5'10" tall, with a slight build, a kind face, and gentle manner. Her limp is a constant reminder of the fire giant's brutal assault.

Elexa will accompany the party for the remainder of the adventure. Her healing skills may prove invaluable, especially if the adventuring party lacks a cleric.

To the Castle

Harkon's castle is 20 miles south of Keswig, almost a day's journey by foot. The PCs must traverse the hills and wild pastures but have no dangerous encounters along the way.

As the PCs reach the top of a grassy knoll, they see the castle for the first time. Read the following:

> Elexa guides you to the top of a grassy knoll. "I used to play here as a child," she says. "From here, you can see the whole of my uncle's land."
>
> The knoll is surrounded on three sides by trees and pastures. To the south you see a small lake nestled in a valley. A castle of moss-covered stone sits on the edge of the misty lake. "There it is," says Elexa. "My uncle has lived there all his life."
>
> The castle looks several hundred years old. A single tower rises in its southern corner, and the roof is covered by a weather-worn battlement. On closer inspection, you notice that the castle sits atop a crag, about 20' from the lake shore. The castle's drawbridge has been pulled up, and thin plumes of smoke are rising from the roof.
>
> "I'm not sure how many brigands

are inside," says Elexa. "but one is a woman. She promised to release my uncle if I pay a 5,000 gp ransom, but I doubt she will honor her word. Assuming my uncle still lives, the brigands are probably holding him in the cellar. There's an old dungeon down there—a vestige from the castle's prior owners."

Five brigands are holed up in the castle, led by a ruthless thief named Malvira Dalant. They are awaiting the arrival of the rest of their band—the reinforcements led by Malvira's consort, who recently broke out of jail.

PCs may take this opportunity to study the castle. Elexa can describe the interior in detail and will even draw floor plans in the dirt if the PCs ask. Included with this adventure is a poster map of Harkon's castle, which the DM may unfold and use as a players' aid when the PCs are ready to make their attack.

The drawbridge and the twin portcullises (in area 1) can be raised and lowered only from the armory (area 8). Even if those obstacles are overcome, entering the castle may be more difficult than expected, as Elexa hastily points out:

"Years ago, a wizard named Jarrow created four magen to help maintain the keep and protect it against intrusion. These magical guards required neither food nor sleep, and their loyalty was absolute. As a further precaution, Jarrow gave my uncle a magical scroll. This scroll, when read, creates an impenetrable shield around the castle, completely barring entry. Only those inside the castle when the scroll is invoked may pass through the invisible shell without harm; others cannot.

"Somehow the brigands managed to enter the castle without alerting the magen. I suspect the brigands later found Jarrow's scroll and activated it. So far as I know, there is no way to enter the castle while the shield protects it."

Give the players a few moments to study the poster map or a roughly drawn sketch of the castle interior (Elexa's sketch). If the PCs perform a closer reconnaissance of the building's exterior, describe it in detail. The brigands are expecting Elexa to return, with or without the ransom money, but they are not keeping a careful watch. They are convinced the castle is impregnable.

PCs intent on exploring the castle closely should be warned that the quiet, secluded pasture and the lake tend to amplify sounds. PCs hoping to sneak up to the castle might provoke a flock of egrets to flutter up from the lakeshore. The birds' noise is enough to alert the brigands, as are the sounds of clanking armor and hushed voices. Thieves who make a successful Move Silently roll may approach the castle undetected.

The Invisible Shield

The invisible shield enclosing the keep becomes a shimmering force field when a *detect invisible* spell is cast. The force field protects only against the incursions and attacks of outsiders. Creatures inside the keep when the scroll is first invoked can move and hurl things through the barrier. They can even leave the castle and return, passing through the barrier as if it were not there.

The thin, invisible shield fits Castle Justheart like a sheath; the gap between the shield and the castle walls is less than an inch thick. The shield does not cover the roof (so rain can fill the castle's reservoir during a seige), but it does enclose the south tower and the door leading to the roof. PCs can land on the roof without touching the shield. Unfortunately, the roof provides no entrance to the keep (unless the PCs smash their way through the stonework). Of course, adventurers in *gaseous form* can fly up to the roof and enter the castle through the tiny gap between the shield and the castle walls, but they are subject to several limitations (not the least of which is the inability to carry equipment).

The shield is a variation of the 8th-level *force field* spell (see the *RC*, page 57), although Jarrow has modified the spell so that it molds itself around the target structure. Spells, missiles, weapon attacks, and most other attacks simply bounce off—even *dispel magic* has no effect on the shield. Two sorts of spells are effective: *teleport* and *dimension door* spells can bypass the shield, and *disintegrate* spells can destroy sections of the force field.

The shield cannot be turned on and off at the caster's leisure. Once in place, it remains until the actual scroll from which the spell was cast is torn or destroyed. (When the other brigands finally arrive at Castle Justheart, the brigands inside the castle will be forced to dispel the shield, but PCs may not want to wait that long.)

To the Wizard's Tower

Before attempting an assault on the castle, Elexa suggests that the PCs visit Jarrow, the wizard who lives in the hills to the west. Read the following text:

"The wizard Jarrow invented the magical barrier, and he was a good friend who used to visit us often. I remember he and Uncle Harkon always played chess together. The games would last for days, and when my uncle won he would parade around the castle like a squire who'd just won a jousting contest."

"Uncle Harkon knew Jarrow before I was born. From what I know, the wizard was indebted to my uncle for some service, though they never spoke of it. I believe Jarrow will help us rescue my uncle from the brigands' clutches. At the very least, he may lend us magical aid for our quest. His *crystal ball*, for instance, would let us see the brigands' every move. Jarrow might also know a way to negate the barrier surrounding my uncle's keep."

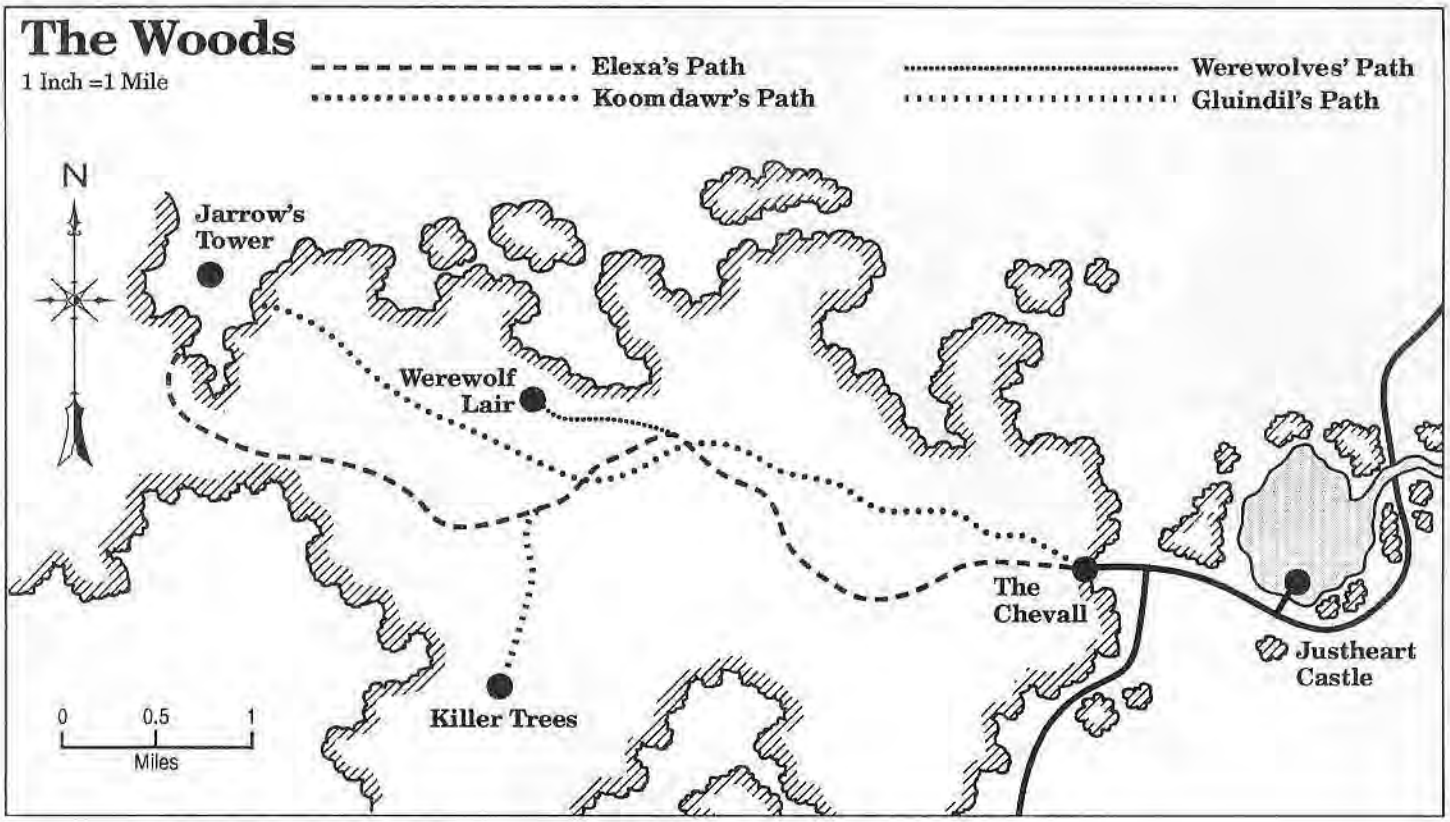
"Jarrow lives about five miles west of here. I'm sure I can still find my way to his tower, but the terrain is a little treacherous, so we'd best be careful."

The journey to Jarrow's remote tower is more perilous than the trip to Harkon's castle. Use some or all of the following encounters as the party makes its way through the woods and brambles.

The Chevall

When the party reaches the woods west of the castle, read the following:

You come to the edge of a dense woodland. Just as you prepare to enter the forest, you glimpse a strange shape partially hidden among the trees. The creature realizes it has been seen and steps forward. Although it appears to be a man, its lower torso is that of a horse. The creature has an arrow nocked in its bow but does not make any threatening gestures. "A chevall," whispers Elexa in awe.



The half-horse creature is indeed a chevall, and although chevalls resemble centaurs, they can assume the form of a normal horse at will. This particular chevall, Koomdawr by name, prefers his centaur form while in the wilderness.

Like all chevalls, Koomdawr despises wolves and other predators. He recently chased a werewolf out of the forest, injuring the creature with three magical arrows. Koomdawr is scouting the forest's edge for signs of the werewolf or his arrows. The chevall can tell whether the PCs are werewolves once they come within 60'. (His sense of smell is extraordinary.)

The chevall does not attack unless provoked. He knows the exact location of Jarrow's tower but hasn't seen the wizard in a long time. Koomdawr will gladly guide the PCs to Jarrow's tower in exchange for a gift of arrows, sweet foodstuffs (such as fresh fruit), or just plain courtesy. He will be especially pleased by any gift of magical arrows.

If the PCs accept Koomdawr's offer, he will guide them through the woods using the quickest and safest route he knows. If the PCs continue their trek alone, Koomdawr will respect their wishes and ask that they greet Jarrow on his behalf.

Koomdawr, chevall: AC 5; HD 7*; hp 39; MV 180'(60'); #AT 2 hooves/1 weapon; Dmg 1d6/1d6/by weapon; Save F7; SZ L; ML 9; INT 12; AL N; XP 850; CC/21. Short bow, 15 *arrows +1*. The statistics given are for Koomdawr's centaur form.

The Hunted

As the party members continue their trek through the woods, they happen on some strangers. Read the following text:

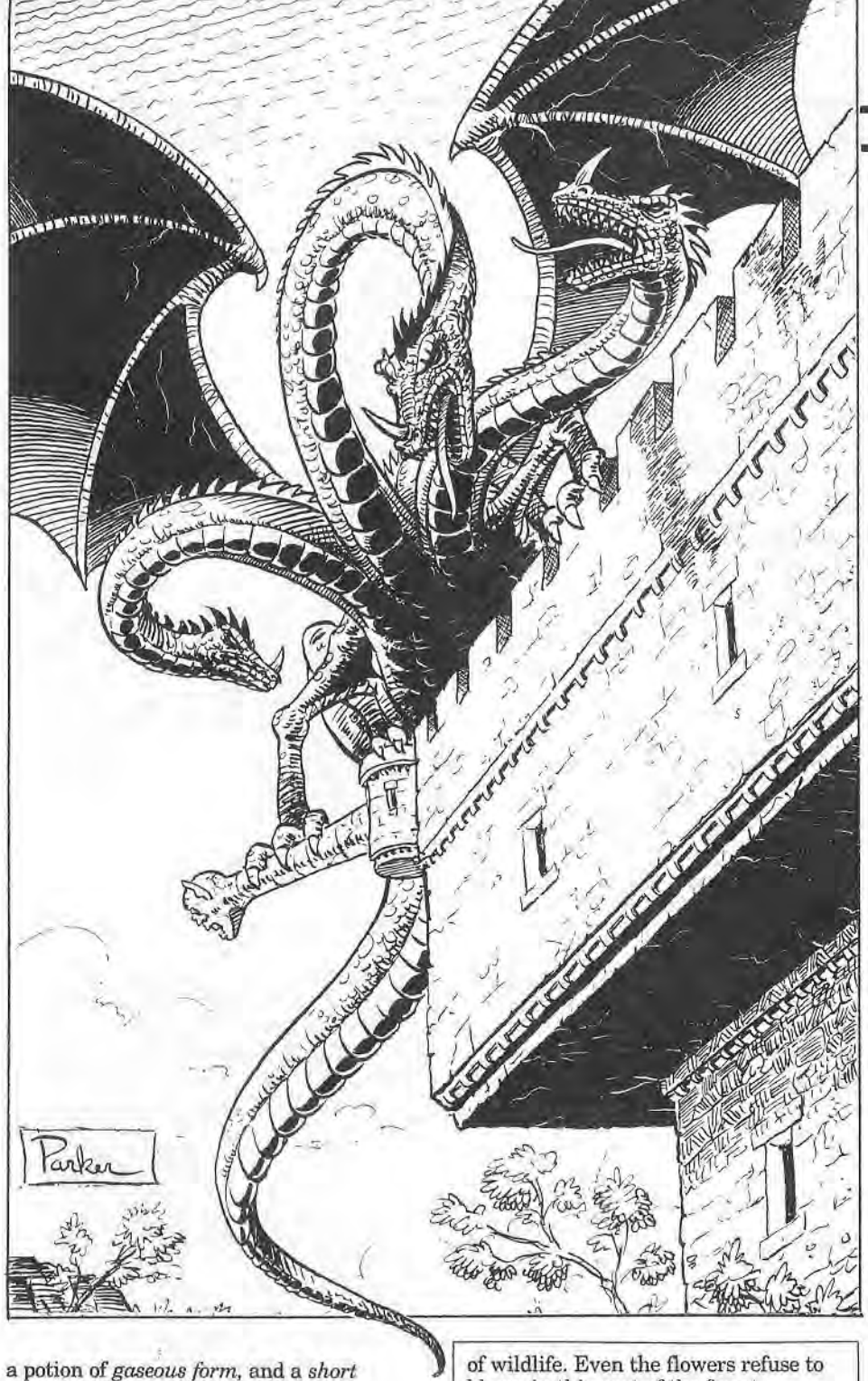
> Up ahead, you see four green-robed, druidlike figures walking single-file through the brush. The leader is leaning heavily with the aid of a rough-shod cudgel. The druid at the back of the line looks much younger than the others and is eating a ripe apple.

The approaching figures are not druids but werewolves wearing druids' robes. They are looking for one of their comrades who was chased away by the chevall. If Koomdawr is with the party, he will recognize the werewolves by their smell; he will unleash a small flurry of arrows without warning and chase the "druids" into the depths of the forest. Neither the fleeing werewolves nor the chevall return.

If Koomdawr is not present, the werewolves greet the PCs warmly and offer to guide them through the woods, to keep the party from straying into danger. If they are accepted as guides, the werewolves will lead the PCs directly to their hidden lair (a riverside cave) where three more werewolves wait. Neither the PCs nor Elexa should notice the slight change in route, since the riverside cave is close to the beaten path. If the PCs seem distrustful, the werewolves try to allay their suspicions with pleasant chatter. Failing that, they attack and attempt to gain surprise.

Werewolves (4 or 7): AC 5 (9); HD 4*; hp 30, 27, 23, 24, 20, 19, 17; MV 180' (60'); #AT 1 bite; Dmg 2d4; Save F4; SZ M; ML 8; INT 10; AL C; XP 125; RC/190. The 30-hp werewolf, Rachdar, attacks as a 5-HD monster and adds +2 to his damage rolls. In animal form, the werewolves can be harmed only by magical or silver weapons.

The werewolves' cave is filled with the bones of slain prey, which hides their treasure: a sack of 112 gp, an antidote potion of the weakest type (*RC*, page 232),



a potion of *gaseous form*, and a *short sword +2*. Neither potion is labeled.

The Copse of Evil Trees

If Koomdawr guides the PCs, this encounter will not occur. Otherwise, read the following as the party enters a dense section of woodland:

> An old footpath meanders through this section of the woods. The trees look much older with their knotted limbs and faded leaves, and you see no signs of wildlife. Even the flowers refuse to bloom in this part of the forest.

The forest west of Harkon's castle is home to many strange creatures, but perhaps the strangest is a shargugh named Gluindil. Gluindil is magically tied to the forest, and he lends his strength to the woods. Shargugh are 3′ tall humanoids with wild, matted-brown hair and tangled beards. They can transport themselves up to 600 yards through trees five times/day. When hidden among the trees, Gluindil is 90% undetectable.

At one time, the woods were home to a mated pair of shargugh, but Gluindil's mate was killed when she wandered into a copse of carnivorous, killer trees. As a result, the surrounding woodland has lost its vitality. The plants and trees still grow but bear no fruit or flowers. Nothing new will grow here for another six years unless a druid casts a *remove curse* on the land to restore its fertility.

The mischievous Gluindil approaches the party unseen, using his ability to instantaneously transport himself through the trees. Using his Pick Pockets (85%) and Move Silently (85%) abilities, Gluindil tries to steal something valuable from the PCs, such as a magical dagger or a purse. He transports a safe distance away with the stolen item, laughing at the PCs while hidden in the shrubbery. The shargugh leads the PCs to the killer trees, hoping that the party will dispatch the arboreal antagonists. Gluindil does not speak any language other than his own and has difficulty communicating by any other means. If the PCs slay the killer trees, Gluindil will happily guide them to Jarrow's tower by the safest route.

Gluindil, shargugh: AC 7; HD 3*; hp 15; MV 150′(50′); #AT 1 bite or weapon; Dmg 1d4 or by weapon; Save E6; SZ S; ML 7; INT 10; AL N; XP 50; CC/92.

The killer trees are indistinguishable from normal trees. If the PCs stumble into the copse, the trees lash out with their branchlike tentacles. They are relentless and fight until destroyed.

Each of the killer trees' limbs attacks as a 6-HD monster, and any hit inflicting 5 hp damage or more against a limb will sever it. Victims who cannot cut free are dragged into the tree's mouth the following round and bitten for 3d6 hp damage.

Killer trees (4): AC 5; HD 6; hp 43, 38, 35, 31; MV 0′; #AT 4 limbs/1 mouth; Dmg 0 each/3d6; Save F3; SZ L; ML 12; INT 1; AL N; XP 275; CC/64.

Jarrow's Tower

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs reach Jarrow's tower:

> Further ahead, through the trees, you can see a peculiar structure built atop a rocky knoll. The tower widens at the top, and the walls are encrusted with green moss, giving the structure a passing resemblance to a large mushroom.
>
> However, the tower's peculiar

appearance is not what astounds and frightens you. Perched on the tower's flat roof is a fearsome, three-headed dragon with wicked horns and blue-black scales!

Elexa takes a moment to point out that Jarrow was known for his skill at casting illusions. Although feywings (three-headed dragons) once hunted in the nearby wilderness, they are just a legend now. It is not unlike Jarrow to cast such an illusion to deter other monsters from approaching the tower.

Unfortunately, the feywing atop Jarrow's tower is real. When the PCs approach the castle, it will spot them and hiss loudly before gliding to attack. The creature is too stupid and aggressive to retreat; it fights to the death.

The feywing was responsible for Jarrow's demise. It swooped down on him while he was surveying the countryside from his tower roof. Jarrow's remains can be found on the rooftop (area 10).

Feywing: AC 4; HD 7 + 1; hp 44; MV 60' (20'), fly 180' (60'); #AT 3 bites or 3 horns (or combination); Dmg 2d4 (bites) or 1d10 (horns); Save F7; SZ L; ML 9; INT 4; AL C; XP 450; CC/39.

1. Entrance. The door to Jarrow's tower is made of sturdy iron-bound oak and has been *wizard locked* at the 17th level of ability. PCs may use *knock* spells to gain entry to the tower, but only a successful *dispel magic* will permanently undo Jarrow's *wizard lock.*

Beyond the doorway is an unlit, 20' long corridor with another oaken door set into the far wall. Neatly burned into the surface of the door is a peculiar sigil shaped vaguely like a "J." In the ceiling above the door are several small murder holes.

The PCs may pass beneath the murder holes safely, but one of Jarrow's guardian constructs is watching the adventurers through the murder holes (see area 4 for its statistics). The construct does nothing but watch the intruding party.

The door leading to Jarrow's parlor (area 2) is unlocked. The sigil on the door is Jarrow's insignia.

2. Wizard's Pawns.

Two padded couches face each other in the middle of this rectangular room, and between them sits an octagonal wooden table with a finely crafted chess set placed upon it. A delicate glass globe suspended above the table glows brightly, illuminating the entire chamber. A well-worn armchair with matching footstool rests in one corner, nestled between a shapely wooden cloak rack and brass pipe holder. The pipe holder is an ash-filled urn secured to a brass tripod. Six pipes of various sizes hang from tiny brass rings around the holder's circumference.

Jarrow's chess set is carved from wood and is not particularly valuable (30 gp for the complete set). The pipe urn and tripod are worth 100 gp collectively; more importantly, a spare key to Jarrow's bedroom (area 6) is buried in the urn's ashes. Two fine cloaks hang on the cloak rack, though neither are magical.

The parlor is lit by a *continual light* spell cast inside the globe hanging above the table. PCs casually searching the room will discover four chess pieces (pawns) lying on the floor near the table. Careful inspection of the chessboard reveals that all 32 pieces are in play. The four fallen pawns are extra pieces.

If any of the fallen pawns are touched, all four immediately transform into demos magen. Magen resemble sexless, hairless humans with skin the color and texture of hardened candle wax. Each of the demos magen has Jarrow's magical insignia painted on its forehead, and all of them wield swords. Jarrow created similar beings to guard Harkon's castle, but they were slain by the brigands.

The magen have orders to attack all intruders and will construe the party's unannounced entrance as an intrusion. If the PCs flee Jarrow's tower, the magen will not pursue. They simply remain in this chamber, standing idle with their swords in hand. When magen are slain, they explode in a dazzling pyrotechnic display, leaving nothing behind but colored smoke.

Demos magen (4): AC 7; HD 3 + 2; hp 22, 19, 16, 15; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1 weapon; Dmg 1d8 or by weapon; Save F4; SZ M; ML 12; INT 9; AL N; XP 50; CC/73. All magen, including those in areas 4, 7, and 8, are immune to *charm* and *fear* spells.

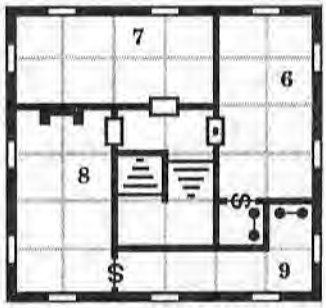
3. Secret Ladder. Beyond the secret door, a wooden ladder has been affixed to one wall. The ladder climbs up to

Jarrow's Tower

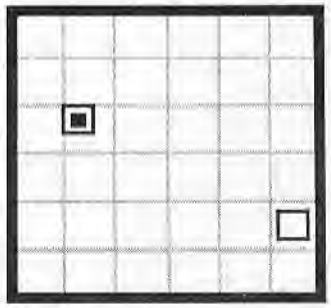
1 Square = 10'

First Floor

Second Floor



Third Floor



Roof

Jarrow's bedroom (area 6) and was intended for use as an escape route in an emergency.

4. Kitchen. At one end of this kitchen stands a circular wooden table surrounded by three chairs. A few clay dishes and a basket of stale muffins sit on the tabletop. At the other end of the kitchen stands a rectangular work table covered with pots, dishes, and other culinary items. Several cooking implements hang in the blackened hearth behind the work table, and a pair of unlit lanterns dangle from the kitchen's ceiling. Light filters in through two slender windows.

Hidden in the shadows of the northeast niche (above area 1) is a galvan magen. It discharges a bolt of static electricity at the first intruder it sees; it can use this method of attack only three times/day. The magen is armed with a sword for melee attacks.

Galvan magen: AC 3; HD 5*; hp 24; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 weapon or lightning bolt; Dmg 3d6 (save vs. dragon breath for half damage) or 1d8 (sword); Save F5; SZ M; ML 12; INT 9; AL N; XP 300; CC/73. See area 2 for immunities.

5. Pantry. The walls of this 10' × 10' pantry are lined with wooden shelves, stacked with various foodstuffs, jars, and kitchen supplies. On the floor rest four small casks, and an old broom leans against one wall.

PCs searching the shelves find a sack of flour, a bowl of eggs, three stale pastry crusts, a small sack of dried apples, a half-filled jar of raspberry jelly, a jar of dry but edible mushrooms, a bag of roots, eight jars of spices, six oil flasks, 22 wax candles, a rolling pin, and several recipes scrawled on scrolls.

Hidden among the jars of spices is a potion of *bug repellent* (RC/232), while mixed in with the recipe scrolls is a scroll of *equipment* (capable of creating a wizard's hat, a sprig of wolfsbane, a pair of boots, a 10' ladder, a torch, and a 50' rope with a grapple). The ragged broom is actually a *dancing broom,* a unique magical item that Jarrow created to sweep by itself. The broom cannot fly but will clean the floor of an entire room whenever the command word "Berezul" (etched on the broomstick) is uttered.

6. Jarrow's Bedroom. The door to this room is locked. A spare key is hidden in the parlor (area 2), but the door may be opened by a thief making a successful Open Locks roll. A *knock* spell will also open the portal.

Tiny motes of dust drift slowly about this unlit chamber. A comfortable bed rests between two windows against the west wall. Under the south window stands a desk with a matching wooden chair, and crouched atop the desk is a large stuffed rat with glassy eyes. Next to the rat is a small wooden puzzle-cube and a silver tripod with a *crystal ball* nestled in it.

A dusty lantern hangs from the ceiling, and a throw rug made from bugbear hide covers the middle of the floor. A wooden trunk with Jarrow's sigil burned into its lid sits in the far corner.

The stuffed rat on Jarrow's desk is harmless, and the puzzle cube is no more than an interesting diversion. The desk drawer contains a pair of birchwood spectacles (75 gp), 89 gp in a *pouch of security,* a velvet bag containing six prisms (15 gp each), a scroll of *protection from lycanthropes,* and a *quill of copying.* The *crystal ball* on the desk is genuine and can be used to spy on the brigands in Harkon's castle. The *crystal ball's* silver tripod is worth 150 gp. The candlestick is nonmagical.

The lantern hanging from the ceiling is actually a *lamp of long burning.* Jarrow's trunk is *wizard locked* shut (at 17th level) and contains his nonmagical, neatly folded apparel. Hidden in a secret compartment in the trunk's lid is Jarrow's *rod of cancellation.* The PCs will need the rod to dispel the invisible shield around Castle Justheart.

7. Library. Hanging between the windows on the south wall is an exquisite tapestry of a unicorn standing on a rocky mountain bluff. Opposite the tapestry, against the north wall, stands a tall, sculpted bookcase packed with large tomes. A handsome green carpet lies on the floor in front of the bookshelf.

The library's collection covers architecture, alchemy, engineering, law, mathematics, and spellcraft. Among the books is a tome titled *The Text of the Magenmaker,* which details the expensive and exhausting process of fabricating magen of all types. Only a wizard of 10th level or higher can understand this text, and only those of 12th level or higher can apply its formulas. Opening the book summons two scalos magen, which immediately attack all intruders present. When a scalos magen touches its victim, the target creature is *teleported* 1d20 × 100 yards in a random direction (no save). The magen inflict no damage with this attack and will not *teleport* anyone holding the magical tome or one of Jarrow's spellbooks (see below), preferring to use their short swords instead.

Scalos magen (2): AC 7; HD 4 +2*; hp 19, 18; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg special or 1d6 (short sword); Save F5; SZ M; ML 12; INT 9; AL N; XP 200; CC/73 (magen, variant). See area 2 for special immunities.

The *Text of the Magenmaker* is worth 5,000 gp to an interested buyer. On another shelf are Jarrow's three spellbooks, each one bound and locked. The keys were lost when the feywing devoured Jarrow, so the locks must be either picked or magically opened. The books may be trapped with *feeblemind* or *polymorph other* spells at the DM's discretion.

Spellbook 1 contains all 1st- and 2nd-level spells listed in the *RC.* Spellbook 2 contains all 3rd- and 4th-level spells listed in the *RC.* Spellbook 3 contains the 5th- and 6th-level spells *animate dead, cloudkill, contact other plane, dissolve, feeblemind, hold monster, magic jar, passwall, teleport, wall of stone, woodform; anti-magic shell, disintegrate, projected image, stoneform, wall of iron,* and *weather control.*

8. Laboratory. Two unlit lanterns hang from the ceiling of this 20' × 40' chamber. A large rectangular table occupies much of the floor space; its entire surface is cluttered with beakers, clay pots, retorts, and other alchemical equipment. A mahogany cabinet with two doors stands against the east wall, between a pair of curtained windows. The cabinet's doors are both engraved with Jarrow's insignia. A fireplace is built into the south wall, with a stack of wood beside it.

Waiting in the room are two caldron magen and a hypnos magen, created and rendered *invisible* by Jarrow. All three look identical and have Jarrow's sigil painted on their foreheads. When the PCs enter the room, each magen drinks a potion of *invulnerability* given to them by Jarrow (improving their AC and saving throws by 2). On the second round, they become visible and attack. The party must make a Surprise roll with a −2 penalty.

Caldron magen (2): AC 5 (3 with

potion); HD 4*; hp 22, 17; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg 1d10; Save F4; SZ M; ML 12; INT 9; AL N; XP 125; CC/73. Caldron magen have elastic limbs that wrap around their victims and secrete acid for 1d10 hp damage each round.

Hypnos magen: AC 7 (5 with potion); HD 2*; hp 13; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg special (*charm person* once per round); Save M2; SZ M; ML 12; INT 9; AL N; XP 25; CC/73.

Hypnos magen have no physical attacks but can cast *charm person* once per round. PCs *charmed* by this particular magen are ordered to drop their weapons and leave the castle immediately (assuming they haven't been seized by the other magen). The *charm* is permanent until the hypnos magen is killed or the magic is dispelled.

The storage cabinet is *wizard locked* at the 17th level of ability. If it is opened, the PCs find its shelves lined with bottles and jars of colored liquids. Many are inert herbal concoctions or salves. However, several magical potions are hidden among the harmless liquids; the potions are labeled in a script familiar to all wizards as *animal control, antidote* (two of each type, see *RC*, page 232), *climbing* (×2), *diminution* (×3), *elasticity, flying* (×2), *gaseous form* (×2), *healing* (×5), *human control, invisibility, luck, poison* (×2), *polymorph self*, and *water breathing* (×2). Jarrow never wrote down the recipes for his concoctions, so no notebooks are stored in the cabinet.

The worktable apparatus is fairly ordinary. Scattered among the beakers and utensils are roots and herbs that serve as basic ingredients for many potions. PCs searching the table find a *slate of identification* that magic-users can use to identify magic items, including the items in Jarrow's tower (see *RC*, page 241 for specifics).

9. Secret Corridor. This bent, dusty corridor is illuminated by light filtering in through the windows along the outer walls. At the western end of the hall a wooden ladder leads to a trap door in the ceiling. The unlocked trap door leads up to the roof (area 10).

10. Rooftop. The roof of Jarrow's tower is wide, flat, and covered with pebble-sized stones. A 3'-high stone chimney pokes out from the rooftop, and a 4'-high crenelated wall encloses the perimeter. The view of the surrounding woods is quite astounding.

Assuming the PCs killed the feywing, the only thing they find on the roof are the grisly remains of Jarrow the wizard. Only his right hand and right boot were not devoured. Jarrow's *ring of memory* is still on the third finger of the severed hand (the ring lets a spellcaster recall one memorized spell/day). Elexa has seen this ring before and recognizes it immediately as Jarrow's. His boots were magical *boots of elvenkind*, but the left boot has long since dissolved in the feywing's gut. The right boot is useless alone.

Returning to the Castle

With the horrifying discovery of Jarrow's half-eaten corpse, Elexa is justifiably withdrawn on the trip back to Castle Justheart. Luckily, the journey is without incident, provided the PCs return to Harkon's castle before the brigands' reinforcements. The brigands are not scheduled to arrive for a week, but this could change depending on how the party handled the perils of Jarrow's tower. If the PCs spend several days recuperating, their return to Castle Justheart could be seriously delayed.

Statistics for the approaching brigands are given in "The Brigands Arrive" section. Allow the PCs to stage at least one assault on the castle before the reinforcements arrive.

If the PCs had a relatively easy time at Jarrow's tower, insert the following encounter on the return trip to Castle Justheart. This encounter is optional and should not be used if half the party was killed or seriously wounded fighting Jarrow's guardians.

The Wild Archers

As the adventurers make their way through the woods, they are attacked by six archer bushes that have uprooted themselves and stand within 10' of the party's path. Watching the archer bushes from the trees are three vicious wood imps. The imps have learned that they can steal treasure from wanderers once the archer bushes finish devouring them. The imps have also learned that adding their own poison-coated arrows helps the archer bushes dispatch their prey more quickly.

> The return trip to Castle Justheart has been uneventful so far, although you cautiously retrace your steps through the woods to avoid meeting any more monsters. Suddenly, you are in the midst of a flurry of thorny darts shooting out of the nearby shrubbery.

The party is surprised on a roll of 1-4 on 1d6. The archer bushes remain stationary until one or more of the PCs fall, at which point they close in for the feast. As soon as the archer bushes unleash their thorns, the wood imps fire their small poisoned arrows. PCs struck by the wood imps' arrows must make saving throws vs. poison at +2. PCs failing the saving throw take an additional 1d8 hp damage and become sluggish for 2d4 rounds. Sluggish PCs suffer a −2 initiative penalty and move at half speed until the poison wears off.

If the wood imps are discovered, they flee into the woods. If pursued, the creatures will whistle for their mounts, a trio of huge wood spiders. The wood imps flee if they fail a Morale check; they command the spiders to attack if their Morale holds.

Archer bushes (6): AC 7; HD 2*; hp 14, 12, 11, 9, 7, 4; MV 3' (1'); #AT 1 thorn spray; Dmg 1d4 per spray (hits multiple targets, maximum 3 sprays/day); Save F1; SZ S; ML 12; INT 0; AL C; XP 20; CC/11.

Wood imps (3): AC 6; HD ¾ (1d6 hp); hp 5, 3, 2; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1 bite or 1 arrow; Dmg 1d3 (bite) or 1d4 (arrow); Save Normal Man; SZ S; ML 7; INT 10; AL C; XP 6; CC/112. Each wood imp carries two poisoned arrows and six normal arrows.

Huge wood spiders (3): AC 6; HD 1+3*; hp 9, 8, 8; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 bite; Dmg 1d6 + poison; Save F1; SZ S; ML 8; INT 2; AL N; XP 19; CC/101.

Justheart Castle

Justheart Castle is roughly 90' square and 75' high. The poster map included with this module shows all six levels. Starting in the lower center of the poster map and moving clockwise, the levels are the cellar, ground floor, 2nd-4th floors, and rooftop. The cardinal points of the compass appear on the rooftop as ornaments.

The castle was built over 150 years ago by a barbarian huntsman named Deremon. During a night of drunkenness, Deremon staggered off the rooftop, struck his head on a rock, and drowned in the lake. Deremon's mantle was inherited by his son Caldor, a ruthless

and power-hungry man who built a dungeon in the cellar and used its grisly instruments on trespassers.

Caldor was slain by barbarians, and when he died his lands were forfeited to the crown. The king chose to give the land and castle to the Justheart family in exchange for loyal service, and the fiefdom has remained theirs ever since. The dungeon in the cellar is nothing more than a memory of darker days.

The castle's chapel is a fairly recent construction. It was built by Harkon's father for the women in the family, all of whom were practicing clerics of the Order of Yarella, an Immortal dedicated to hunters and lost souls. Harkon encouraged his niece Elexa to continue the tradition. In fact, he initially opposed her joining the king's Healing Order. However, Elexa's dedication to duty quickly won Harkon over, and he never again questioned her calling.

Elexa's departure for the Crusades left Harkon alone in the castle. He never had much use for town life, and only his friendship with Jarrow kept him from going mad during the months of Elexa's absence.

Brigand Bane

About two weeks ago, Harkon rose one morning to the sound of human voices outside his castle. When he peered out his window, he saw five poorly dressed people approaching the drawbridge. One of them, a young woman resembling Elexa, appeared seriously wounded, and the other four appealed to him for aid. The brigands claimed they were shepherds who had been ambushed by orcs while tending their flock.

Harkon ordered his demos magen to lower the castle's drawbridge and raise the portcullises. He could not bear to let the young woman die at his doorstep, and he knew Elexa kept some healing potions in the kitchen. Once they were invited inside, the brigands quickly seized control of the castle. They brandished the weapons they had hidden under their shepherds' robes, and Harkon found himself at swordpoint. Jarrow's magen rushed out to defend Harkon but were defeated and vanished into smoke. The brigand leader (the woman feigning injury) ordered Harkon be taken to the castle dungeon, where he has remained ever since. The brigands feed him and keep him healthy because he is worth more to them alive than dead. They have no compunctions about killing him, however, if they are threatened.

Several days after the keep was secured, Emistil (an elf brigand) found Jarrow's *scroll of defense* in Harkon's desk. After determining the scroll's power, the elf used it to create the invisible shield that now encloses the castle. With the shield in place, the brigands have become lax in their efforts to guard against intrusion.

Malvira Dalant (human thief): AC 4; T7; hp 27; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (×2 damage with successful backstab); S 9, I 16, W 10, D 18, C 14, Ch 14; Save T7; ML 8; AL C; XP 850; Thief skills: OL 45%, FT 40%, RT 38%, CW 93%, MS 48%, HS 35%, PP 50%, HN 58%; black leather armor, *ring of seeing, dagger +2,* potion of *invisibility.*

A life of hardship and ill treatment has turned this once starry-eyed girl into a ruthless, serpent-hearted villainess. Malvira Dalant is treacherous, foul-tempered, and sadistic (perfect qualities for a brigand leader). She is actually second-in-command of the brigand gang, but her superior (and consort) has not yet arrived at the castle. She intends to dispose of him eventually and take control of the band, but for now she is biding her time.

Malvira's ring, taken from a slain merchant, enables her to see through illusions (similar to a cleric's *truesight* spell). For example, the ring allows her to see *invisible* PCs and discern true targets from *mirror images*. Her potion of *invisibility* is reserved for escapes or backstab attempts.

Emistil Darkeyes (elf): AC 4; E4 (see below); hp 24; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14 (+1), I 18, W 9, D 16, C 17, Ch 11; Save M9 (see below); ML 7; AL C (formerly N); XP 725; scale armor, short sword, short bow, 16 arrows, three *arrows of penetrating,* two *arrows of stunning,* spellbook (contains all the spells below plus *read magic* and *detect magic*).

Spells (as 9th-level magic-user): *charm person, magic missile, shield; invisibility, mirror image, wizard lock; haste, lightning bolt, protection from normal missiles; ice storm, polymorph self; teleport.* Emistil saves his *teleport* spell for escapes, taking Malvira with him if possible. He rarely casts his higher-level spells for fear of drawing suspicion from his fellow brigands (see below).

Emistil is the most mysterious of the brigands. His manner can best be described as cheerful, even when he's shooting an arrow through someone's skull. The elf has not always been like this; when he first joined the brigands, he was sinister and rather disquieting. But several months ago, during a botched attempt to plunder a wizard's lair, Emistil was possessed by the wizard's lifeforce (thanks to a *magic jar* spell). The wizard, seeking a new life, made transition permanent by destroying the receptacle holding Emistil's lifeforce. The wizard, Feyram, thus trapped himself inside the elf's body.

Feyram/Emistil thoroughly enjoys his new life as a brigand. He's quite content to take orders rather than give them, and he admires Malvira for her sheer capriciousness.

Octario Marcade (human fighter): AC 4; F5; hp 36; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16 (+2), I 12, W 8, D 12, C 14, Ch 9; Save F5; ML 9; AL C; XP 400; *chain mail +1,* bastard sword (with a 250-gp gem set into its dragon-shaped pommel), *light crossbow +1,* 25 quarrels, pouch containing four cut gems (100 gp each).

Octario was second in line to a great inheritance, but was disowned after he tried and failed to murder his older brother. To avoid paying for his crime, Octario stole his father's sword and set out on his own, and he has been hunted by his brother ever since. Octario joined the brigands for protection and has risen through the ranks quickly. His swordsmanship and arrogance are legendary, and he genuinely believes he is destined to lead the brigands some day. His only fear is facing his brother again.

Octario's pouch of gems was taken from Harkon's desk. For all his noble conceit, Octario is nothing more than a scoundrel and petty thief.

Yarik Kelve (human thief): AC 5; T4; hp 15; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (×2 damage with backstab); S 12, I 10, W 11, D 16, C 10, Ch 6; Save T4; ML 5; AL C; XP 125; Thief skills: OL 30%, FT 25%, RT 25%, CW 90%, MS 35%, HS 24%, PP 35%, HN 45%; leather armor, short sword, light crossbow, 18 quarrels, pouch holding 5 pieces of stolen jewelry (50 gp each), two vials of poison (see below).

Yarik is a lazy and cowardly villain with little regard for the welfare of others. His only ambition is to become rich and live like the fat, gold-touting merchants he sees on city streets. Yarik has a

morbid sense of humor and little sense of personal hygiene. His thin build and oily black hair give him a distinctive, ratlike appearance. He dips his quarrels in lethal poison (save vs. death). Each vial is good for five applications.

Bald Bolarny (human fighter): AC 3; F3; hp 17 (24); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 18 (+3), I 5, W 9, D 10, C 12, Ch 9; Save F3; ML 8; AL C; XP 50; plate mail, sword, dagger.

Bald Bolarny is so named because of his lack of hair. Although not particularly bright, he has proven himself reliable in combat, which is what the brigands need. Bolarny discovered a suit of plate mail in the castle armory that fit him perfectly and now wears the suit despite the fact that it has the Justheart family crest (a red griffin on an amber background) emblazoned on its chest plate.

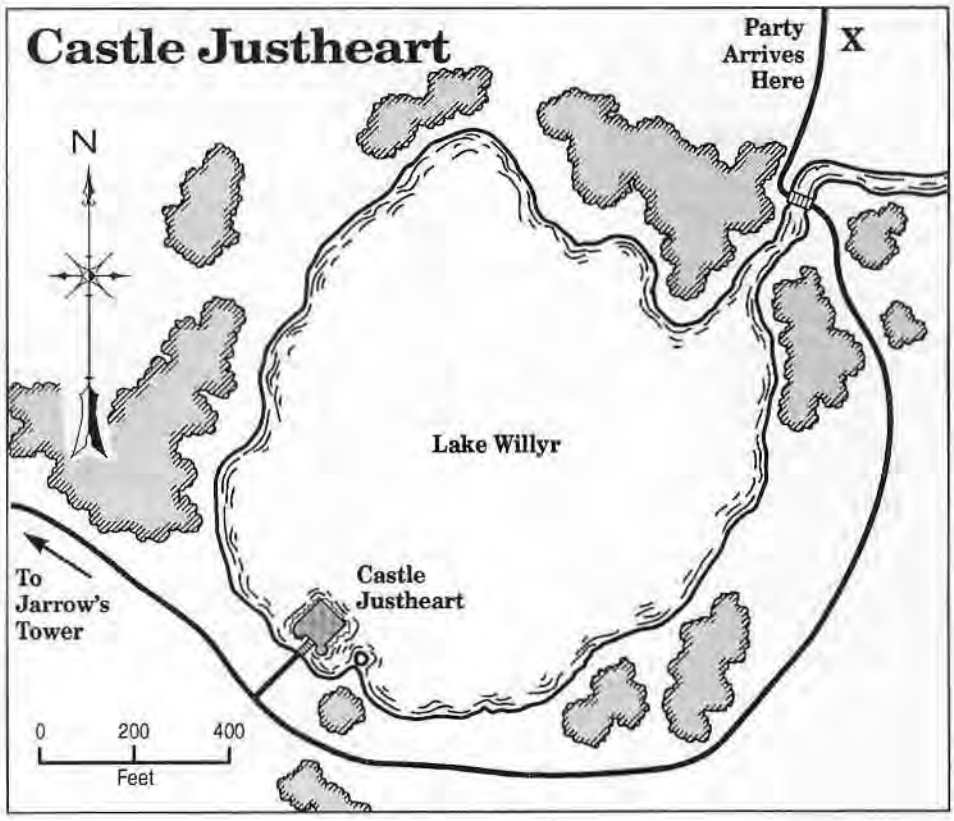
Bolarny fears Malvira and follows her orders to the best of his ability. He is not evil but lacks the self-will and determination to think for himself. Although he maintains a rough-and-tumble exterior, Bolarny enjoys music and taking care of small domestic animals. He speaks often about the puppies he raised as hunting dogs in his youth. His current hit points reflect wounds he suffered in the fight with Harkon's demos magen.

Where the Brigands Are

The brigands are not confined to any one area of the keep. Justheart Castle is relatively small, and the brigands are accustomed to moving from room to room whenever it suits them. The brigands do not necessarily sleep at night; their sleeping patterns are erratic and difficult to predict, depending on their mood, their gambling, and their bickering. They never rest at the same time.

The PCs may meet the brigands just about anywhere, although they are seldom gathered in one place. (Being cooped up in the castle has made them irritable.) Below are the areas where they are most likely to be encountered if no alarm has been sounded:

• Malvira habitually paces around the fourth floor balconies (areas 14 and 15). When she wants privacy, she withdraws to Elexa's former bedroom (area 16), which she has declared off limits to all the other brigands. Sometimes she checks on the elf, because she knows about his preoccupation with reading



(something she abhors). She also checks on Harkon from time to time.

• Emistil can usually be found in Harkon's bedroom (area 10) reading his spellbook or one of the volumes from Harkon's private collection.

• Octario and Bolarny like to play checkers (using chess pieces) in the common room (area 9). They also engage in mock battles, usually in the commom room or the meeting hall (areas 9 or 13). Occasionally they explore the armory (area 8), and they have been given the task of operating the winches for the portcullises and drawbridge.

• Yarik spends most of his time in the cellar, taunting poor Harkon in the dungeon (area 7) or sampling the various ales and wines in the cellar (area 6). Occasionally he lounges in the meeting hall (area 13), picking at his dirty nails with a kitchen knife. He rarely sleeps.

Jarrow's Magic Items

If the PCs were successful at Jarrow's tower, they should have found at least one magical item to use against Harkon's captors. The *slate of identification* in Jarrow's laboratory will help PCs identify items that are not labeled or otherwise familiar. A few of these magical items and their possible uses are revealed below:

Rod of cancellation: Taken from Jarrow's bedchamber, the rod can be used to dispel the invisible shield surrounding Castle Justheart. Touching the rod to the shield dissolves the barrier instantly but permanently drains the rod of magic. The effect is very discreet, so the brigands may not know the shield has collapsed until the PCs are upon them. The tricky part is getting close enough to the shield to touch it with the rod.

Crystal ball: This item has obvious uses if the party contains a magic-user or elf who can scry with it. Elexa can describe three of the brigands (Malvira Dalant, Octario Marcade, and Emistil Darkeyes) in sufficient detail to permit successful scrying.

Antidote potions: These potions help the PCs counter the lethal poison on Yarik's crossbow quarrels. They may also be used with the poison potion in a scheme to pollute the castle's water reservoir (see below).

Entrance and escape potions: PCs can use the potion of *climbing* to scale the castle walls, the *diminution* potion to fit

through the arrow slits, the *elasticity* potion to squeeze under the drawbridge and through the portcullises bars or through the arrow slits, the potion of *polymorph self* to assume the form of a bird or spider, or the potions of *water breathing* to walk along on the bottom of the lake and approach the castle unseen. Determined PCs could fly up to the roof, drink *water breathing* potions, and swim through the plumbing with the aid of *diminution* potions. (The "Multiple Potions" rule in the *RC*, page 232, prevents PCs from imbibing more than one potion at a time, but the DM may overlook the rule in favor of letting the players explore an interesting option.)

Potions for special purposes: Clever PCs might pour the poison potions into the reservoir on the roof and later administer antidote to the polluted water supply. This is a slow and uncertain way of dealing with the brigands; though useful in a long-term siege, the poison may inadvertently harm Harkon. Once Harkon is found, the PCs could ensure his safe departure by giving him the potion of *gaseous form*. The potion of *animal control* can be used on the egrets to either command their silence during a preemptive strike or create a disturbance while the PCs sneak into the castle. A PC who drinks the potion of *human control* can command one or more of the brigands to leave the castle, turn against his fellows, or lower the drawbridge.

Text of the Magenmaker: This magical tome from Jarrow's library (area 7) is of special interest to Feyram/Emistil, because he has heard of Jarrow and his magen constructs. The elf may ask Malvira to accept the tome as ransom payment for Harkon, claiming it can be sold for at least 5,000 gp. (Malvira, who dislikes books, will be tough to persuade.) Of course, Emistil would consider selling the tome only after careful study. Fortunately, he lacks the level and experience to fully understand (let alone use) the tome.

Ground Floor

1. Castle Drawbridge. The brigands plan to keep the drawbridge raised until their cohorts arrive, but clever PCs may trick them into lowering the drawbridge prematurely. Fooling the brigands is a difficult task, however, since they are naturally paranoid and wary of deception.

The drawbridge is not held shut by the invisible shield surrounding the castle and may be lowered (regardless of whether the shield is in place). However, the shield covers the entrance into the castle, barring entry.

The 20'-long drawbridge is just the right length to span the water separating the castle from the shoreline. Beyond the drawbridge are two portcullises, and beyond them are a pair of heavy oaken doors that are barred from the inside. The doors can withstand 100 hp damage before sundering, and the portcullises can be raised with a combined strength of 64. However, the murder holes in the ceiling above the portcullises and the two guard stations on either side of the entrance make such feats risky at best.

If the brigands are alerted to invaders, one of the archers will position himself inside the guard station closest to the tower. PCs who approach the drawbridge or force their way into the area between the two portcullises will be shot.

2. Entrance Foyer. This dark chamber is tiled with polished slabs of red marble. Suspended from the ceiling is an iron chandelier with several unlit candles in its holders. Directly across from the castle entrance are three alcoves, each containing a suit of armor. The empty suits clutch swords and maintain a constant watch over the chamber. Two archways lead to a larger chamber beyond, and a narrow passage to the south leads to the tower staircase.

The three suits of armor have been welded at the joints to keep them erect, so the armor cannot be worn. The swords may be removed and used as weapons but are not magical.

3. Dining Hall. Two huge tables and two iron chandeliers dominate this 75' × 35' chamber. The ropes suspending the chandeliers are tied to hooks along the northeast wall. A raised white marble platform at one end of the chamber holds a cloth-covered table and eight comfortable chairs. Unlit torches are mounted in the walls above the platform.

The Justheart family once held banquets in this hall. Before his wife died, Harkon held great feasts and invited the families of all the farmers and shepherds who lived on his land. He also hosted hunters' banquets, although it has been years since he filled the room with merrymakers.

4. Kitchen and Pantry. A large table occupies most of the kitchen floorspace. Items set on the table include several loaves of baked bread, an oven stick for removing the bread, an unlit candle in a clay candle holder, a cleaver, and a few knives. Along the walls are several jugs, a few flour sacks, two fireplaces, and a water basin with a faucet embedded in the wall above it. Right near the entrance to the dining room is a simple hoisting apparatus placed atop a hole that drops down into the cellar.

The hoist is used for bringing barrels up from the cellar (area 6). First, an individual must go into the cellar and tie a rope around a barrel, which must then be hauled up by someone pulling on the rope in the kitchen.

The faucet above the water basin has a handle rather than a pump, a luxury not all PCs may immediately understand. The faucet sometimes needs tightening, which explains the wrenches and pliers on the kitchen table. Turning the handle spills water into the basin. The water piped is through the castle's interior walls from the rooftop reservoir. The basin is used for both preparing food and washing dishes.

The jugs near the water basin are all empty, but the one next to the flour sacks contains brine (used for cooking and preserving).

An iron-bound door leads to a small pantry. The shelves are cluttered with jars of spices and preserved foodstuffs, as well as eating utensils and dishes (enough settings for several dozen guests). There is nothing of particular value here.

Cellar

5. Castle Well. The only feature in this dark, dirt-floor chamber is a moss-covered well in the north corner. A rickety wooden door is set in the nearby wall.

When the rooftop reservoir is empty, this well serves as the castle's water supply. The water is not as fresh or clean as the rainwater in the reservoir, so it is used only during droughts and sieges.

6. Storage Cellar. This cold, dark room is filled with barrels and food sacks. A circular stone platform occupies the north corner of the room, and two barrels, both moist with condensation, stand on the platform.

The two barrels on the platform are filled with ale, the others with wine,

vinegar, and an emergency supply of water. The sacks contain flour, sugar, and spices.

Directly above the circular platform is the apparatus for the kitchen hoist (see area 4). A rope with hooks attached to it dangles through the hole in the ceiling.

7. Castle Dungeon. Harkon Justheart will call out for help the moment the PCs enter this room.

> Beyond a narrow archway is a damp and filthy chamber filled with tools from a darker era. From the entrance you can see a ramshackle torture rack in the center of the room and a spiked iron cage hanging from the ceiling by rusted chains. Other devices from stone daggers to thumbscrews, vises to hammers, are strewn about as well. Half buried in the dirt are the skeletons of two individuals who met their end here years ago.

The dungeon is illuminated by fiery embers burning in a pair of cylindrical stone tubs. Hot pokers are buried in the embers, and the light is bright enough to reveal the four cells at the far end of the room. Rusted iron bars seal each cell, though only one appears occupied.

Locked inside the southern cell is Uncle Harkon. He is frightened and fatigued because the brigands (particularly Yarik) have been threatening to torture him with burning embers and red-hot pokers. So far they have done no more than threaten the old man.

Harkon Justheart (retired human fighter): AC 9; F3; hp 11 (18 at full); MV 90′ (30′); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 12, I 11, W 12, D 9, C 9, Ch 11; Save F3; ML 6; AL L; XP 1,000 (for rescue); unarmed.

Harkon's cell door is locked with a rusty by sturdy padlock that is difficult to pick (−10% to thieves' Open Locks rolls) but easy to smash with a heavy blunt weapon. Emistil has cast a protective spell on the lock so that touching it causes a shrill voice to scream "The prisoner is escaping!" three times. The sound is loud enough to be heard by anyone in the cellar or on the ground floor. The spell, similar to the AD&D® game's *magic mouth* spell, is one of Emistil's own devising.

The instruments of torture should not interest Lawful PCs too much. Nothing in the room is magical or valuable.

Second Floor

8. Armory. This open area is filled with items of particular interest to fighters. Disassembled suits of armor have been neatly arranged in racks and in alcoves. The three tables along one wall are cluttered with gauntlets, breastplates, helmets, and weapons. Among the weapons and pieces of armor are 15 iron-bound chests, four stools, and a light ballista. Also visible are the winch mechanisms for both the portcullises and castle drawbridge.

Harkon Justheart is, among other things, a skilled armorer. Although he outfitted his magen guards, he usually fashions armor just to alleviate boredom. Although he is self taught and unable to make magical armor, his work is impressive. The armory contains enough piecemeal armor to complete four suits of plate mail, 12 suits of chain mail, and five suits of banded mail. The only things missing are shields. All suits of armor are sized for male humans, and many of the chest plates have the Justheart family crest painted on them.

Of the 15 trunks in the armory, two are opened and empty, plundered by Octario and Bolarny; the two chests tucked under the tables were empty to begin with. Three of the closed trunks contain several hundred light crossbow quarrels; three more contain heavy crossbow bolts by the dozens. Of the remaining five chests, one holds 12 short swords; another contains eight pair of gauntlets; another holds 24 daggers; a fourth contains torches; and the fifth holds chain mail mesh and loose armor plates.

Apart from the light ballista, the other weapons stored in this room include a heavy crossbow, a light crossbow, a broad sword, 16 normal swords, and two spears. A keg near the narrow western door (leading to area 10) contains a fine black powder. This is gunpowder, although the brigands haven't figured this out yet. Harkon bought the keg from a passing traveler who needed to lighten his horse's load. If ignited, the keg explodes for 12d6 hp damage (60′ blast radius, save vs. dragon breath for half damage).

9. Common Room. This large room is mostly empty. Torches placed in brackets along the walls illuminate the chamber well enough to see a pair of tables at one end. The larger table has a game board and dagger lying atop it. Perhaps the room's most notable feature, however, is its stone forge. Next to the forge is another table made of sturdy oak, and this table supports an anvil and ironworking tools. Additional tools lean against the wall behind the table. A large pail of water sits nearby.

This is where Harkon fashions his armor. In fact, an unfinished chestplate and backplate still lie atop the northern corner table. The forge is used to heat the metal, and the pail of water is used for cooling.

This room is large enough to house a castle garrison, but Harkon never saw much use for guards. (Jarrow's demos magen seemed adequate.) The game board on the large table is actually part of a chess set. When Jarrow the wizard paid a visit, Harkon would challenge him to a game of chess. Lately, however, Octario and Bolarny have been using the chessboard to play checkers. The dagger atop the table was taken from the armory (area 8) by Octario. It is not magical, and neither are any of Harkon's tools. The barrel in the western corner (by the large table) contains several gallons of drinking water.

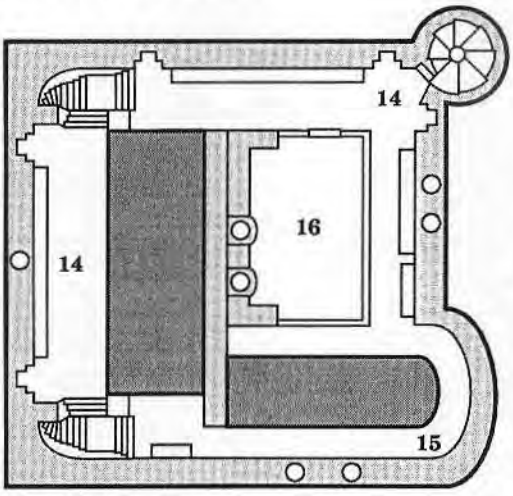
10. Harkon's Quarters. Red marble tiles cover the floor of this comfortable room. The only furnishings are a large desk with several items on it, a comfortable chair, a four-poster bed, and a bookcase. The room is lit by torches placed in sconces.

The items atop Harkon's desk include a map of the realm, a navigator's compass, a quill pen, a candle stick, a bottle of fine wine, and a furled scroll. The furled scroll, formerly the *scroll of defense*, is now blank. By reading the scroll, Emistil knowingly activated the invisible barrier designed to protect Harkon's castle from invasion. Tearing the scroll in half or destroying it completely dispels the barrier permanently.

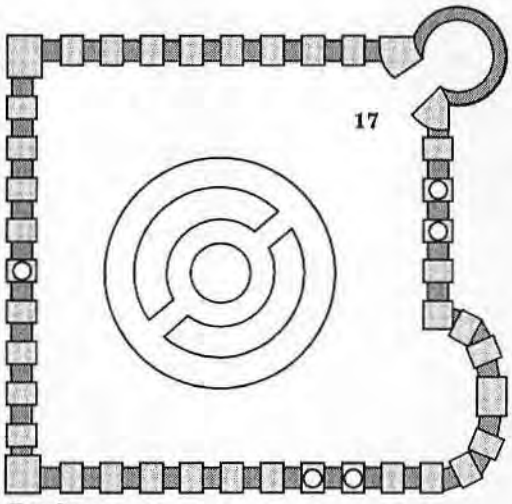
The desk drawer contains several sheafs of paper, a few quills, a jar of sepia ink, and the Justheart seal. The seal is shaped like the Justheart family crest (depicted on the floor of area 13). Emistil keeps his spellbook stashed in the drawer.

Harkon's private collection of books includes volumes on such diverse subjects as history, law, astronomy, architecture, and heraldry. None of the volumes are magical or especially valuable. However, a pouch containing 50 pp is hidden inside a hollowed-out book titled *The Root of Evil.*

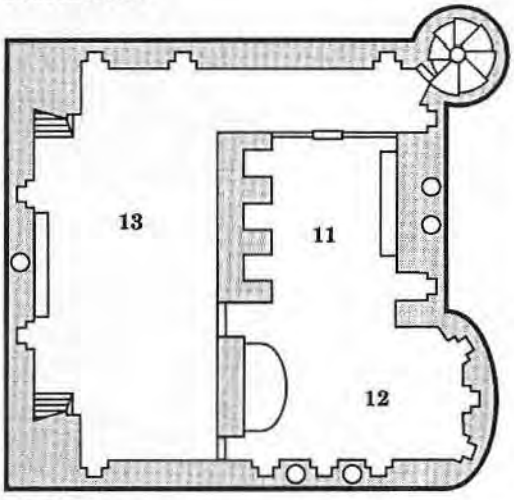
Castle Justheart



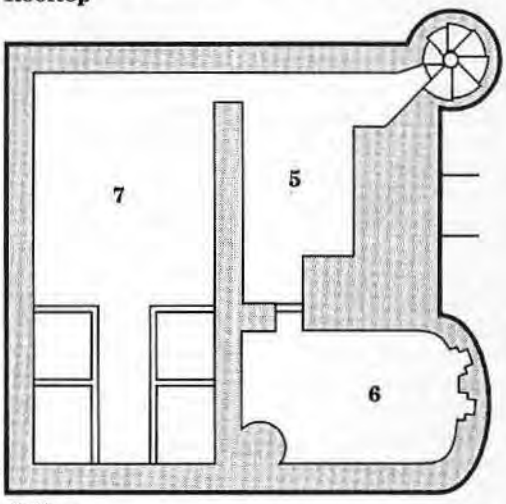
Fourth Floor



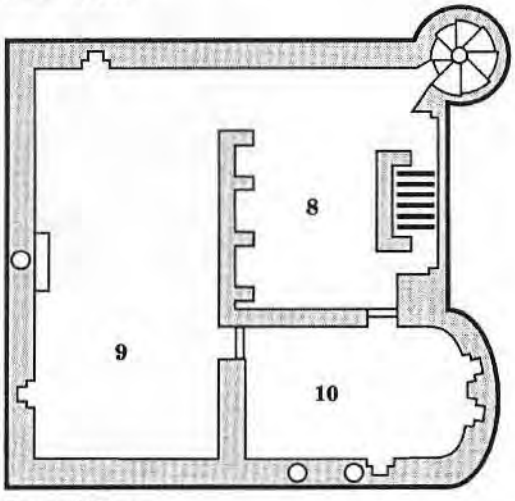
Rooftop



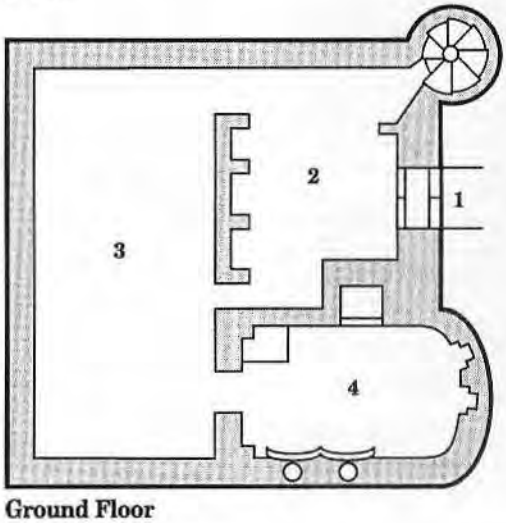
Third Floor



Cellar



Second Floor



Ground Floor

Third Floor

11. Bathing Chamber. This nicely adorned chamber features a raised bath made of tar-sealed wood. The pool is filled with water that flows from a spigot on the nearby wall. A barrel under the spigot catches the water. Between the barrel and the pool is a 3'-tall candlestick of engraved gold.

Cabinets have been built into the room's three alcoves, and a handsome rug covers part of the floor. A huge fireplace spans the southern wall, and a padded leather chair sits in front of the hearth.

The spacious bathroom is joined to the chapel (area 12) for reasons unknown. (One may speculate that worshipers of Yarella are not known for their modesty.) Water for the bath comes from the interior walls of the castle, which in turn are filled by water from the rooftop reservoir. (See area 17 for details.)

The cabinets in the alcoves contain towels and soap. The green rug is a family heirloom and is worth 500 gp. The golden candlestick, another heirloom, is worth 1,200 gp.

12. Chapel. This regally appointed chapel is in pristine condition. The room's U-shaped balcony is supported by eight marble pillars. Comfortable, padded benches in the center of the room face a dais of bluish marble, upon which rests an altar of polished wood draped in white satin cloth. A ceremonial goblet (75 gp) and bowl of beaten bronze (50 gp) rest on the altar. The balcony 12' overhead is enclosed by an iron railing (see area 15).

13. Gathering Hall. This room's most prominent feature is the great crest painted on the floor. It boldly depicts the Justheart family emblem: a red griffin rampant, painted on an amber background and topped by the great helm of the kingdom. A soaring wooden balcony encloses the great hall on three sides, supported by four sculpted pillars. An iron chandelier hangs in the middle of the room, but its candles are melted stumps and cannot be lit.

The chamber itself is furnished with an assortment of tables and comfortable chairs, and a large fire burns brightly in the hearth. Hanging on the walls are several animal heads and banners sporting the Justheart family colors.

For all its grandeur, there is little of value in this great hall. During the castle's heyday, guests spent their nights chatting or sleeping here.

Two staircases lead up to the balconies that surround the chamber (see area 14).

Fourth Floor

14. Balconies.

> Cluttered bookshelves span the walls of this great balcony, which almost circles the entire fourth floor of the castle.

A collector of books, Harkon has filled his castle with more volumes than he can possibly read in a lifetime. Many of the volumes were loaned to him by Jarrow and deal with topics such as herbalism, botany, literature, mathematics, symbology, anthropology, and mythology. In the latter subject, scholars can find ample material on the feywing dragon the PCs met at Jarrow's tower, plus facts on a host of other monsters indigenous to the region.

Buried among the volumes in the northern bookcase is one of Jarrow's old spellbooks, tucked in here for safekeeping. The tome has no title but bears Jarrow's distinctive "J" insignia. (PCs who visited Jarrow's tower recognize it immediately.)

The book contains the following spells plus any others the DM wishes to add: *analyze, detect magic, hold portal, light, read languages, sleep; detect invisible, ESP, knock, levitate, web; clairvoyance, fly, infravision, invisibility 10' radius, protection from normal missiles; confusion, dimension door, massmorph, polymorph other, contact outer plane,* and *passwall.*

15. Chapel Balcony. This red-tiled, U-shaped balcony encloses the chapel. A painted iron railing guards against accidental falls.

16. Elexa's Bedchamber. Although it is not indicated on the poster map, the door to this chamber is trapped to deter unwanted intruders, including other brigands. Malvira strung a wire inside the door; opening the door more than 1' (just enough room for Malvira to squeeze through) trips the wire, which fires a crossbow rigged near the bed. The crossbow bolt strikes the interloper for 2d4 hp damage. The trap is difficult to detect and disarm from outside the room (−25% to a thieves' Find and Remove Traps rolls).

This chamber is lit by a pair of lanterns suspended from the ceiling. The room contains a comfortable bed with a wooden candlestick beside it, a cluttered table, a padded leather chair, and two chests. A golden balance has been knocked from the table and lies on the floor by the chair.

Formerly Elexa's bedchamber, this room now serves Malvira's needs. The items on the table include an open jewelry box, a clerical scroll (with the spells *remove curse* and *speak with the dead,* each cast at 6th level), letters from Harkon to Elexa, an engraved copper plate with matching mug (worth 45 gp for the pair), and a book titled *Tales from the Faerie Realm* (one of Elexa's favorite bedtime books). The balance that Malvira accidentally knocked to the floor is worth 300 gp.

The chests contain some of Elexa's clothing, much of it messed up during Malvira's thorough search of the contents. One chest holds a sack containing 110 gp and 10 pieces of jewelry taken from Elexa's jewelry box (total value 1,450 gp). Many of these items were passed down through the Justheart family. Malvira has stored them here until she plans to leave. Elexa will be heartbroken if her jewelry is lost, because so much of it has great sentimental value.

Rooftop

17. Reservoir.

> The roof of Castle Justheart is flat stone, bleached by time and enclosed by a low crenelated wall. Looking out over the edge you see a fine mist covering the lake and a thick fog rolling in from the distant valleys.

The roof itself has several unique features, not the least of which is the circular water reservoir in its center. The 5'-deep reservoir is half-filled with rainwater, and its inner ring has two valves designed to let the rainwater flow down into the castle. Another interesting feature is the set of four rusted metal symbols secured to the castle's corners, each indicating a cardinal point of the compass.

The reservoir is actually part of the roof, and the compass symbols are bolted and cannot be removed easily. The two valves in the reservoir's inner ring are opened and closed by turning the faucets in the kitchen (area 4) and the bathroom (area 11). Water collected here pours into special holding cells

within the castle's interior walls, and from there is carried to its intended destination. Although clever, the plumbing system is not without its drawbacks. PCs may notice irregular dampness on the interior walls where water is stored, and occasionally small debris finds its way into the reservoir and filters down into the plumbing. Thin wire mesh in the pipeline helps filter out some of the debris, but cannot eliminate the finest sediment.

The invisible shield encapsulates the entire south tower, preventing outsiders from opening the door to the stairs. However, the door can be opened by those inside the castle when the *scroll of defense* was activated.

The Brigands Arrive

The PCs have one week to oust Malvira and her fellow brigands from Castle Justheart before the others arrive. If the PCs are successful, they can fortify the keep before Mandrake Oskellos and his cohorts appear (see below). Mandrake, unwilling to besiege the castle, will withdraw after vowing revenge.

If the party fails to breach the castle's invisible shield before the brigands arrive, Malvira and her cohorts will be forced to dispel the shield to allow Mandrake and the others inside. Either Malvira or Emistil tears the *scroll of defense* in half (see area 10), and the shield dissipates instantly.

The arriving brigands ride on stolen horses. If the PCs are near the castle when they arrive, read or paraphrase the following text:

> Several figures on horseback appear on the top of a nearby knoll. Numbering at least two dozen, they survey the surroundings for a moment before galloping down the hillside to the castle. As the riders draw near, you can tell they are not soldiers. Most are dressed in dirty leather armor and look ill-kept and unshaven.

The brigand leader is a brawny, bearded man named Mandrake Oskellos. He is Malvira's consort, although their relationship is based more on respect than love. Mandrake was to be hanged for stabbing a militia sergeant, but his men broke him out of jail. Mandrake rides his great black mare all the way to the castle drawbridge.

Mandrake Oskellos (human fighter): AC 6; F8; hp 54; MV 120′ (40′); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 18 (+3), I 11, W 10, D 14, C 13, Ch 15; Save F8; ML 10; AL C; XP 725; leather armor, bastard sword, short sword, 62 gp in pouch.

Mandrake's armor and weapons were confiscated by the city authorities, so he is wearing simple leather armor and carries a borrowed sword. Mandrake didn't take his imprisonment lightly; he plans to exact revenge on the authorities who imprisoned him by disrupting trade routes around that particular city. He has come to Castle Justheart to make plans with Malvira and seek sanctuary from bounty hunters. He intends to remain until his food supplies run out or the authorities track him down.

Vackra Dargoth (dwarf): AC 5; F5; hp 39; MV 60′ (20′); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 17 (+2), I 8, W 7, D 11, C 15, Ch 9; Save F5; ML 12; AL N; XP 175; chain mail, battle axe.

Vackra is a fearless dwarf who follows Mandrake's orders with delight. He is not afraid to die in battle, and many of his evil cohorts believe he has a death wish. For all his bluster, Vackra is not

comfortable with horses and prefers to ride on the back of Mandrake's steed.

Elubith (gnoll wokan); AC 5; HD 2d6+12; hp 19; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; Save M4; SZ M (7′ tall); L 8; INT 12; AL C; XP 125; RC/180; *wand of fear* (12 charges), club, bone necklace. Spells: *magic missile, shield; entangle, web.*

Elubith betrayed her tribe by showing the brigands a secret way into the gnoll lair. The brigands decimated the gnolls and stole all of their treasures, except the *wand of fear* that Elubith was allowed to keep as her reward. Elubith's loyalty is to herself. If the brigands are on the verge of defeat, she will betray them as well.

Parast Shargul (human cleric): AC 9; C3; hp 12; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 10, I 9, W 14, D 11, C 9, Ch 10; Save C3; ML 6; AL L; XP 50; holy symbol, mace, wolfsbane. No spells memorized.

Parast was captured by the brigands and forced to use his healing spells to help them. His deity has since taken away all of Parast's spells, but the cleric continues to help the brigands with his healing skill. He is afraid of dying and is too cowardly to flee unless he is certain the brigands cannot follow him. He will fight in self-defense. If the brigands are all slain or driven off, Parast will thank his saviors and join them as a healer.

Parast does not have his own horse but rides with the gnoll wokan Elubith.

Human brigands (20): AC 7; HD 1; hp 6 each; MV 120′ (40′); #AT 1 weapon; Dmg by weapon; Save F1; ML 8; INT 11; AL C; XP 13; RC/193; leather armor, sword, short bow, 18 arrows, dagger, 2d6 sp each.

These brigands are the real workers in Mandrake's band. They are generally considered "cannon fodder" by their leaders and are easily replaced.

Riding horses (22): AC 7; HD 2; hp 9 each; #AT 2 hooves; Dmg 1d4/1d4; Save F1; SZ L; ML 7; INT 2; AL N; XP 20; RC/185. These animals were stolen from a ranch and are branded. PCs who take the trouble to return the steeds receive a 50 gp reward per horse.

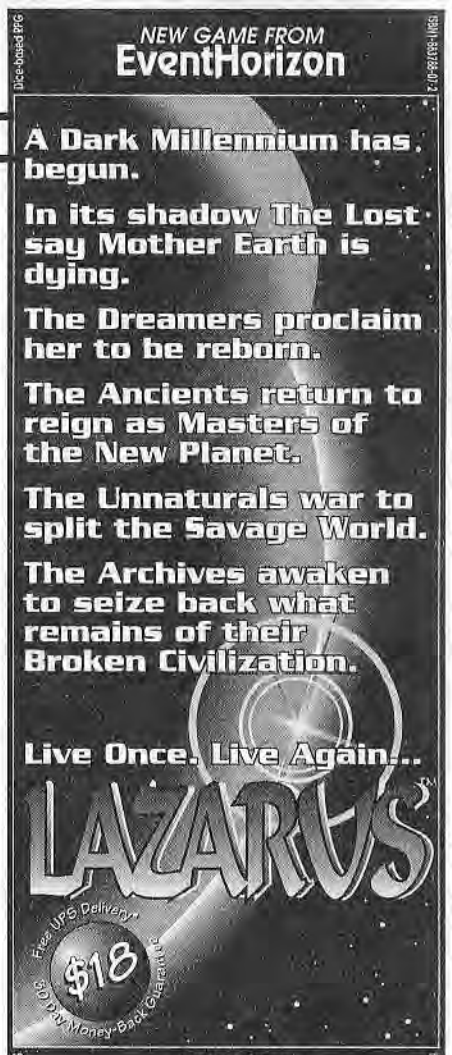
Concluding the Adventure

Once Castle Justheart is restored to its rightful owners and the brigand threat is allayed, the adventure is over. However, any brigands who escaped death or capture will return to exact revenge.

Malvira and Emistil are likely candidates, particularly if Emistil cast his *teleport* spell. Harkon and Elexa Justheart may need protectors for some time to come.

Harkon will be distraught by the news of Jarrow's death and upset by any theft of items from the dead wizard's tower. However, he will let the pilfering pass if one or more PCs are spellcasters who might benefit from Jarrow's knowledge. Harkon can offer the PCs a 50 pp reward for ridding his castle of brigands, assuming the money has not already been taken (see area 10). He can also provide the PCs with several suits of fine-quality armor (see area 8 of the castle). Harkon also invites the PCs to consider the castle their "second home." His only real treasure is his niece, whom he is overjoyed to see alive and well. (If Elexa was killed in the course of this adventure, Harkon will be devastated and too heartbroken for words.)

Harkon is more than willing to repair the PCs' armor before they set out on their next adventure. The PCs must spend several weeks at Castle Justheart while Harkon does his work, just long enough to hear several of Harkon's tall tales, any one of which could lead to further adventures. Elexa will recount her experience as a cleric in the Crusades, after which noble PCs may wish to join the King's Legion and take up arms against the giants and humanoids of the Gulhanor Mountains. Elexa will not join the PCs on their quest, electing instead to remain by her uncle's side. Ω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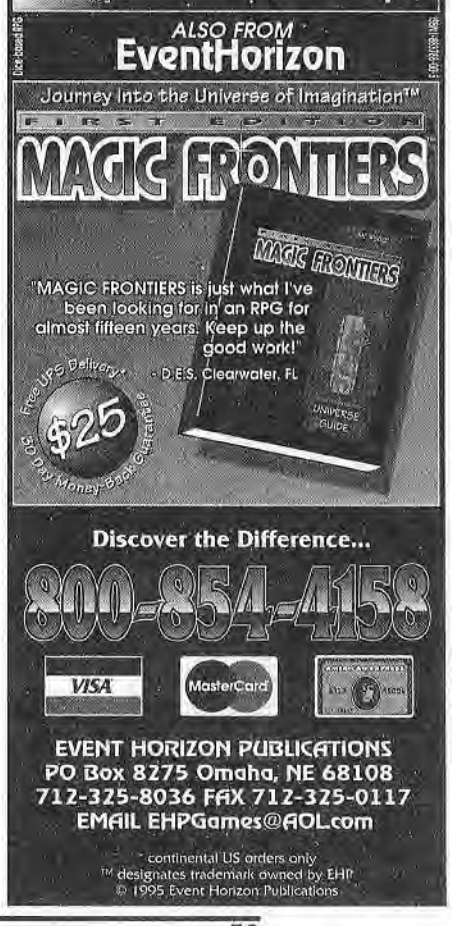


STEELHEART

BY PAUL F. CULOTTA

Dragons never surrender

Artwork by David Kooharian

One-eye walked down the trail, sniffing anxiously for the scent of something good to eat. It had been three days since Big-jaw had beaten him to become pack leader, and now he had to hunt alone.

At the edge of a field, the grizzled wolf spotted a mouse scampering along. It was almost as long as his tail! He bounded toward his prey, drooling at the thought of a fine, tasty mouse in his jaws.

Mouse heard the running and panting of the wolf, squeaked in surprise, and darted left. One-eye smoothly cut her off. Mouse stopped abruptly and jumped back, just out of the reach of the snapping, pointed teeth of One-eye. It then took off in the opposite direction with the wolf in hot pursuit.

Again One-eye quickly overtook Mouse and jumped in front of his prey. Again Mouse darted, this time to the right, but One-eye was there. It dashed back to the left, squeaking in annoyance, but the experienced hunter—long since skilled in the moves of mice, rabbits, and deer—merely adjusted, bounding back and forth, and waiting for Mouse to give up. It was a fine game, and One-eye dearly loved it, as all wolves do.

Finally, Mouse stopped the game and stood up on her two hind feet. She peered intently at One-eye with glittering, defiant eyes. The wolf paused momentarily, then leaped forward, closing his teeth on the soft, brown fur.

One-eye's teeth grated on something hard and scaly!

He backed off growling, his hackles rising. Then he looked up . . . right into the eyes of a cold grayish-blue winged serpent flexing a sharp foreclaw. Its eyes, four feet above One-eye, gave a familiar glitter, and the wolf heard a sharp intake of breath from the beast.

An instinct clicked and One-eye started to bolt, but it was too late. A cloud of choking bluish vapor swept over the wolf, stinging his eye and making him roll spasmodically all over the field. In a few moments, his heart burst, and One-eye no longer had to worry about hunger.

The appearance of the winged serpent sent all the birds flying away in a chirping, frantic flurry of wings. They did not see the large mouse quickly continue her journey west, leaving the wolf's stiffening body alone in the field.

This adventure is about a persistant young lady. Paul dedicates it to another very persistent (but sweet) young lady, his daughter Angela, who will receive her Master's degree right after this issue is released. This is Paul's seventh appearance in DUNGEON® Magazine.

"Steelheart" is an AD&D® adventure for 5-6 PCs, levels 7-9 (about 40 total levels), set in the Forgotten Realms north of the Moonsea. The adventuring party should be well balanced, including at least one cleric PC and wizard PC with spells that can disguise appearances or create noise and other distractions. Members of the Harpers will find this adventure much to their liking.

The adventure is set in the lands of Thar and Vaasa, just north and east of the Moonsea. Although enough background is provided in the text to run the adventure, the DM may wish to use the following additional resources to add more background and atmosphere: *The Bloodstone Lands* (FR9) for background on Vaasa, *FORGOTTEN REALMS® adventures* for a discussion of the Zhentarim, the *Moonsea* accessory for details of Sulasspryn, *Elminster's Ecologies* for a treatise on Thar, and DRAGON® Magazine #110 for its article on the Cult of the Dragon. Because the steel dragon plays such a large role in this tale, the DM should review the description of this creature in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* tome or *The Draconomicon*.

While the adventure is written with Realms politics and factions in mind, it can be adapted to other campaigns with a little work. All that is needed is similar terrain and two evil cults, one of them closely allied to dragons.

Adventure Background

The Cold Lands are some of the most dangerous terrain of the Realms. Just north of the Moonsea are areas claimed by the Zhentarim, also known as the Black Network. The Zhentarim worship Cyric, the god of death, murder, and lies, and are involved in numerous evil plots throughout Faerun. On most occasions, they work covertly through agents, but if they can get away with it, they also resort to raw power. Their major headquarters, Zhentil Keep, has recently been destroyed. Despite having other citadels, they have their eyes on Thar, a land rich with mineral ores. Alas, Thar is filled with fierce ogre and orc tribes that, if united, could mount a stout and possibly successful defense. The Zhentarim believe they cannot take Thar alone.

Far to the east of the Zhentarim's holdings is another dark place—the hideous, swampy land known as Vaasa. Here Zhengyi, the witch king, assembled a host and marched against Vaasa's eastern neighbor, Damara, in the year 1347 by the Dalereckoning. This led to the Bloodstone Wars (detailed in modules H1-H4). Zhengyi was destroyed and the remnants of his forces retreated in disarray behind the cover of the Galena Mountains.

But the evil in Vaasa did not die. Dragons roost in Castle Perilous, the witch king's ruined fortress, and many fell beings still wander the land. Accordingly only the most stout hearted adventurers enter Vaasa. Those who do usually have business in the towns of Darmshall or Polischuck, the only islands of goodness in a swamp of reeking evil.

The dragons nesting in Castle Perilous soon attracted the attention of the Cult of the Dragon. This secretive group fanatically adores dragonkind, and believes that eventually dragons will rule supreme over the world. To this end, they act as facilitators, messengers, and servants for any and all evil dragons they can find. Eventually they try to persuade their masters to become the dreaded dracoliches. Presently the cult has a garrison of several dozen members in Castle Perilous and maintains an outpost in the ruins of Moortown.

In the town of Darmshall lived a family of three steel dragons: Forge, his wife Glimmerfang, and their daughter Steelheart. Like all steel dragons, they were so fascinated with humankind that they lived among them. Of course this meant that they kept themselves *polymorphed* in human form so that none of the wonderful people they lived among would run away screaming in fear. They assumed human names—Jarl, Ingrid, and Katelyn Brekstel—and took on the roles of blacksmith, housewife, and daughter. From her earliest days, Steelheart was instructed strictly to never, ever assume her true dragon form around humans, demihumans, or humanoids unless it was an absolute emergency.

Before Steelheart hatched, Forge and Glimmerfang had served in the Bloodstone Wars as spies for the forces of good. But even with the witch king's downfall, they did not quite feel that his evil, and all its threats to humankind, had been completely exterminated. When they reassumed dragon form (as steel dragons must about every 30 days), they did so far out of sight of the townspeople, and they flew off to Castle Perilous for a good look at the dark keep.

On their last visit, they were surprised to see humans among the red and black dragons sunning themselves on the slopes of the fallen fortress. Taking on red dragon form, they landed to see what was afoot. They were greeted by members of the Cult of the Dragon, who promised these two new "reds" much treasure and power in exchange for help in an upcoming war that would establish dragon supremacy. To impress them, the cult leader confided that soon they would be establishing an alliance with the Zhentarim. The two mighty forces would converge on the land of Thar from the east and the west, crushing it between them. After this, the dragons would enslave the humans in Thar, subjugate all of Vaasa, and move on to greater prizes. Eventually, the leader explained, the Zhentarim would see the wisdom of allowing dragons to rule and would naturally accede to the new order of draconian supremacy.

The two "red" dragons listened politely and pretended to be greatly impressed. They asked questions every so often, and when they had gotten every bit of information they could, they accepted the leader's offer, but told him that they had to return to their lair first to get some magical items they would need. They promised to return to Castle Perilous within a week.

The next day, the cult leader felt the twinges of nagging doubts. These two new red dragons had appeared out of nowhere, not in response to a cult summoning. All the other dragons had readily agreed to fight in the upcoming war, but these two had not accepted quite so quickly, strange behavior for red dragons promised riches and power. And then there was the story about fetching their magical items. They said they had no young, but what dragons would just leave magic and treasure unguarded? A few too many pieces didn't fit, so cult agents were sent to spy in the nearby towns, while dragons searched the wilderness and mountains.

A day later, the picture got clearer. In an open area just outside of Darmshall, a cult agent found obvious dragon tracks, but only human tracks led from the clearing to the town. A cult mage spoke with a wandering wolf and learned that "two big shiny snakes

came to ground, then became people, one he-kind, one she-kind."

Cult agents entered Darmshall and made discreet inquiries. When they learned that the Brekstel family had just left town in a hurry, the hunt was on. Two miles outside town, they found the Brekstels' abandoned hand cart, still full of their belongings. Deep, clear dragon tracks marked the soft dirt beside the cart. The absence of blood or signs of struggle exposed the two dragons as impostors.

The cult and its dragons began a frantic pursuit to prevent the spies from warning the people of Thar. The cult leader alerted the outpost in the ruins of Moortown via a *crystal ball.* The cult members and dragons in Moortown began searching the Galena Mountains bordering Thar.

Forge and his family were spotted flying at treetop level just as they reached the mountains' foothills. Three huge red dragons and one white dragon dove to the attack, using the sun to mask their approach. Steelheart was not surprised, and she barely rolled away from the icy breath of the white dragon, as her parents engaged in a mid-air battle with the reds. Glimmerfang spotted her daughter in trouble, and, tearing herself away from the red, she clashed with the white dragon. Plunging to the ground with the white firmly in her claws, she screamed at Steelheart to flee.

Her daughter obeyed, but as Steelheart fled, she looked over her shoulder and saw her mother impale the white dragon on sturdy trees. To her horror, she also saw the red close its jaws around her mother's neck. Behind that battle, she glimpsed her badly wounded father on the ground keeping the other two reds at bay. Knowing the inevitable outcome of the battle, the young dragon flew away as fast as she could.

Once she crested the mountains, Steelheart landed on rocky ground, assumed the form of a mouse, and took cover among the rocks. For two days, red, green, and black dragons flew through the mountains looking for her, but eventually they left. Keeping her unobtrusive mouse form, Steelheart descended the western slopes of the Galenas and entered Thar. Once she was threatened by a lone wolf that paid the price for its mistake (see the beginning of the adventure).

During the long journey, Steelheart's grief turned to a blinding desire for revenge. Although her parents had told her a little bit about why they were leaving Darmshall, their plan to warn the inhabitants of Thar about the impending Zhentarim-Cult alliance seemed less important than avenging the deaths of her parents.

But how was one lonely, young steel dragon going to do this? Then she remembered how Forge and Glimmerfang had always marveled at human bravery, how men pitted themselves against impossible odds during the Blood War. Perhaps when she got to the next human settlement, she could find a group of heroes who would help her (even unwittingly) satisfy her vengeance.

Starting the Adventure

The PCs begin the adventure in the town of Glister looking for work or responding to an offer for "warriors and wizards strong and bold who want to fill their pouches with gold." Caravans follow the trade routes to Glister to deliver finished goods and pick up rich ore. When they arrive, the PCs discover that they are too late, and their prospective employer has hired someone else. They are now in a dreary border town full of loud traders, wagon trains bringing goods from distant places, and rough dwarven, gnomish, and human miners. Bands of ogres wander about, trading freely, as do fierce nomads with fine, sturdy horses. Several other adventuring groups are in Glister, all just as disappointed as the PCs because they traveled many miles to respond to the notice.

Just as the PCs are cursing their sour luck and thinking about leaving, a man walks up to them with an offer. Read the following to the players:

> A man in his early 20s with dark brown hair and bright hazel eyes walks up to you and addresses you courteously.
>
> "My name is Menzel, and I am an apprentice to Thusk Tharmuil, the greatest wizard in all of Glister. My master has heard of your arrival, and has sent me to invite you to his tower on the east end of town. Will you come to meet him?"

If the PCs ask why, the apprentice simply states that Thusk told him he had something important to discuss, something not appropriate for discussion in the streets. If the PCs decline, Menzel simply moves over to another group of adventurers and invites them instead. The adventure is over, and the PCs can move on.

Assuming they accept, they find that the tower is built into the side of one of the many hills around Glister. The great ironbound door opens creakily, and Menzel escorts the PCs down a narrow corridor opening into a great hall. A sumptuous meal of roast goose, scalloped potatoes, warm bread, and wine is laid out for them. Thusk himself warmly greets the PCs in this room. He is 5'8" and a little portly. He appears to be in his 50s and balding on top, but his bushy gray eyebrows are thick and joined above the nose. His conservative dress consists of a gray robe, black slippers, and a silver rimmed belt holding a jeweled dagger. By an unlit fireplace, a pudgy gray and white cat sits with its legs folded beneath it and stares at the PCs intently. ("Don't mind Sasha, she just keeps an eye on strangers," Thusk says jovially.)

As they eat, Thusk mentions that he has heard of the adventurers from other wizards, and he is glad they are in town. He expresses his sympathy if the PCs tell him of their disappointment at being turned down by the promised adventure, but tries to cheer them up with a few jokes and songs. Thusk is chaotic neutral and strongly believes that jokes, stories, and songs always dispel the blues. If need be, he tells Sasha the cat to join in, and the cat sighs, gets up on its hind paws, and dances in rhythm to Thusk's deep baritone. PCs who join this craziness in some unusual way (for instance, by levitating the cat) make the mage fall out of his chair with laughter (he's an easy audience to please). After seeing if his guests share his sense of humor, he calls for dessert, and Menzel brings out bowls of plum pudding and mugs of steaming black coffee.

As everyone is eating their pudding, the wizard wipes a few more tears of laughter out of his eyes and says:

> "Well, I really thank you for coming to dinner—I haven't had a good laugh in quite a long time. Listen, it's really a shame that your job fell through, but since you're in town anyway, I have a need for adventurers. Actually, so does a new friend of

Random Encounters in Vaasa

Roll 1d10 every two hours. On the road, an encounter occurs on a 1. Off the road, an encounter occurs on a roll of 1 or 2.

On the Road

Roll 1d8 to determine what the PCs encounter.

1. Ring-nose Orc Patrol. A troop of 12 orcs comes walking down the road and attacks the PCs. If any are captured, they warn the PCs of the ambush that their clansmen are planning (assuming the PCs have not fallen into "The Ambush" yet). They have no treasure.

Orcs (11): INT average; AL LE; AC 6; MV 9; HD 1; hp 6 each; THAC0 20; #AT by weapon; Dmg by weapon type; SZ M; ML 11; XP 15 each; short bows, pikes and short swords. Their leader has 2 HD and 11 hp.

2. Druid. Evelyn Doeskin, a druidess of Mielikki, is wandering through Vaasa on her superiors' orders to learn what she can about cult activities. She has wandered the Vaasan swamps for two days and has seen nothing except the occasional troll, boar, or snake. She may join the PCs if treated with respect.

Evelyn: AL N; AC 4; MV 12; D5; hp 30; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 16, C 14, I 12, W 15, Ch 15; ML 13. Spells: *cure light wounds* (×2), *entangle, faerie fire, invisibility to animals, barkskin, goodberry, charm person or mammal, speak with animals, summon insects.* Evelyn wears leather armor and carries a wooden *shield +1*, a scimitar, a sling with lead bullets, and a small knapsack containing ordinary items. She has 3 gp and 15 sp in her pouch. This encounter occurs only once.

3. Boars. Six boars cross the road 20' from the PCs as the adventurers round a bend. The largest boar watches them with a stern eye and charges if the PC do anything remotely hostile; the other boars join the charge the following round. If the PCs remain perfectly still, the boar leader will huff at them and go about his business once other boars have crossed the road.

Boars (6): INT animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 20 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 3-12; SD attack until reduced to −7 hp; SZ M; ML 10; XP 175 each; MM/241.

4. Wolfpack. This pack has picked up the PCs' scent and will track them until darkness falls. Then they rush the camp, trying to grab the smallest PC and make off with him (at least two wolves hitting with a roll two higher than needed). If their victim is Katelyn, she waits until she is carried out of sight. Shortly thereafter the PCs hear a sharp, distressed howl, and Katelyn stumbles back into camp. She pretends to be terrified, and says "a man all in black" waved his hands and the wolf fell dead. If the PCs investigate, they will find the wolf dead but completely unmarked by wounds (dead from Katelyn's breath weapon). Use this encounter only once.

Dire Wolves (12): INT semi; AL N; AC 6; MV 18; HD 4+4; hp 26 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SZ L (7'-12'); ML 10; XP 175 each; MM/362.

5. Wights. Throughout Vaasa, many minions of the witch king died of starvation on their retreat and became ravaging undead. The one that died here was an orc, and it has made three travelers into servant wights. One looks like a man dressed in black, another a teenage girl, and the third a dwarf. They all rush from behind trees in the marsh and attack the PCs until destroyed.

Wights (4): INT average; AL LE; AC 5; MV 12; HD 4+3; hp 30, 17, 16, 14; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA energy drain; SD hit only by silver or +1 or better weapon; MR immune to *sleep, hold, charm*, or cold-based spells; immune to poisons or paralyzing attacks; SZ M; ML 14; XP 2,000 for orc leader, 1,400 each for others; MM/360.

In the boot of the man in black is a short *wand of magic missiles* with 33 charges. In his undead state, he does not remember having it, and so doesn't use it in combat.

6. Thunderstorm. Black clouds roll in, and the PCs are soon drenched as lightning arcs across the sky. PCs who flatten themselves in the road have a 1% chance per turn of being struck by lightning for 5-30 hp damage. Marching PCs have a 4% chance per turn of being struck, and PCs who take shelter under a tree have an 8% chance per turn. PCs in metal armor suffer an additional +2% penalty for each roll. After six turns, the storm stops.

7. Giant Wasps. The PCs walk too close to a giant wasp nest, so the insects attack to shoo the adventurers away. If the PCs flee for two consecutive rounds, the wasps stop their attack.

Giant Wasps (8): INT animal; AL N; AC 4; MV 6, fly 21 (B); HD 4; hp 18 each; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 2-8/1-4; SA poison sting (5d6 hp damage and 2d6 hours of paralysis); SZ M; ML 9; XP 420 each; MM/204.

8. Bloodsuckers. These creatures fall from overhanging tree branches onto their victims below.

Giant Ticks (6): INT animal; AL N; AC 3; MV 3; HD 3; hp 18 each; THAC0 17 (+4 on initial attack); #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA blood drain, disease; SZ M; ML 9; XP 65 each; MM/204.

Off the Road

Roll 1d10 to determine what the PCs encounter.

1. Thunderstorm. Same as encounter 6 on the road. PCs must find a flat area on solid ground with no trees around. This takes two turns.

2. Giant Sundew. Buzzing flies and a sweetish smell linger around a 3' high mass of ropes. PCs who approach within 5' are attacked by the hungry sundew.

Giant Sundew: INT semi; AL N; AC 7; MV 1; HD 8; hp 55; THAC0 13; #AT 6 per target; Dmg 1-3; SA suffocation, continuing damage from sap; SD −1 to victim's attack roll for every three tendrils; SZ M; ML 11; XP 3,000; MM/293 (Plant, intelligent).

3-4. Quicksand. The lead PC steps into quicksand and begins to sink. PCs who link hands and reach out to the trapped PC may grasp the victim by rolling a successful attack roll against AC 10. They can pull him out with a roll under their combined bend bars scores. If the rescuers roll within 10%, the PC does not sink further and they may try again. If they fail, the PC sinks 1' and the others may try again (with a −5% penalty). A second failure entitles them to one more try (−10% penalty).

5. Snakes. Five black poisonous snakes aggressively attack the PCs.

Snakes (5): INT animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 15; HD 2+1; hp 10 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA poison; SZ S; ML 9; XP 270; MM/320.

6. Giant Leeches. As the PCs wade through the swamp, giant leeches attach themselves, one to each PC. Each adventurer has a 1% chance of feeling the bite; if that fails, he does not notice anything until he leaves the water or until he loses half his hit points.

Giant Leech: INT non; AL N; AC 9; MV 3, swim 3; HD 3; hp 15 each; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA drain blood, disease; SZ S; ML 7; XP 175 each; MM/219.

7. Giant Wasps. Identical to encounter 7 on the road.

8. Mosquito Swarm. The PCs slosh into a breeding ground of bloodthirsty mosquitoes. Every round they stay and fight, they take 1 hp damage. Every round they flee gives the PCs a 10% cumulative chance that the mosquitoes stop pursuing them. Roll d% when they escape; for each hp damage a PC took, he has a 1% chance to contract a terrible disease called the Red Fever. PCs whose mosquito bites are magically healed within one turn avoid any chance of disease. The disease manifests itself eight hours later with terrible joint pains, fever, and internal bleeding; the PC is incapacitated and must make a Constitution ability check every four hours or lose 1-6 hp. A *cure disease* spell cast by at least a 7th-level priest removes the illness.

9. Swamp Deer. When the PCs get close, these small deer freeze. They blend well into the swampy background, so it takes a successful Intelligence ability check with a −4 penalty to spot them. Any sudden moves prompt the deer to run off. Unsurprised PCs may try to bring one down for dinner.

Swamp Deer (2): INT animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 18; HD 1+1; hp 7 each; Dmg nil; SZ M (3' high at shoulder); ML 3; XP 20 each; MM/243 (Antelope, modified).

10. Behir. This monster springs out of bushes and slithers quickly to the tasty-looking PCs. It is quite hungry and will not retreat.

Behir: INT low; AL NE; AC 4; MV 15; HD 12; hp 80; THAC0 9; #AT 2 or 7; Dmg 2-8/2-5 or 2-8/1-6 (×6); SA *lightning bolt* every 10 rounds; SD immune to poison and electricity; SZ G (40' long); ML 15; XP 8,000; MM/20.

Steelheart

Steelheart is a young steel dragon posing as Katelyn Brekstel from Darmshall in Vaasa. Like all steel dragons, she loves human and demi-human companions. In her human form, she appears between 12 and 14 years old (she is really 27 years old). Her deeply tanned skin, blonde hair, and light gray eyes make her pretty, but not overly so. She dresses in ordinary clothing and carries a short sword and dagger. Katelyn seems a little quiet and shy.

Steelheart lost her parents to evil dragons in Vaasa and has sworn to avenge them, but she tells the PCs that her parents were captured, in the hope of attracting heroes to help her destroy her parents' murderers. While in their company, she does not take her dragon form except to fight an evil dragon.

Steelheart (juvenile steel dragon): INT very (will develop to supra-genius with age); AL LN; AC 0; MV 9, fly 30 (D), swim 6; HD 11; hp 60; THAC0 9; #AT 3 + special; Dmg 1-10 + 4/1-10 + 4/3-30 + 4; SA poison gas breath weapon with 30' range, save for 3d4 hp damage; SD immune to wizard spells levels 1-4, *polymorph self* (5/day); MR 40%; SZ H (34' long total); ML 18; XP 7,000; MM/86.

mine." Then he turns to Menzel the apprentice and says, "You can bring in Katelyn now."

A few minutes later, the apprentice returns with a girl who looks about 12 years old. She is 5' tall, and is wearing a white linen shirt, green pants, and new brown shoes. She has blonde hair and light gray eyes. Her tan complexion almost hides a few small moles on her jaw. She looks a little worried.

Thusk says, "Katelyn, these are the people I think can help us," and the girl seems to brighten a little with a faint, hopeful smile.

Turning back to you, the wizard says, "A few days ago, Katelyn arrived in town alone and looking quite hungry. Being alone in a frontier town like Glister is not very safe for a girl, but fortunately Menzel found her and brought her here. She told me a most incredible tale. Why don't you tell these kind folk what you told me, Katelyn?"

The girl hesitates, gulps, and says, "Well, my mom and dad were kidnapped. We lived in a town called Darmshall, close to the mountains, but we were moving this way because dad was a blacksmith and he heard that he could make more money here. Well, we had been traveling for several days when all of a sudden two big red dragons with bandit riders flew down and attacked us. Dad pushed me into the woods and told me to run and I did. I heard him fighting the monsters and bandits, but I know he and mom were captured."

Katelyn's lip quivers, then her tears get the best of her, and she sobs, "Please, you gotta get my mom and dad back! Please help me!"

Thusk goes over to the weeping girl and puts his arm around her, saying, "There, there, Katelyn, we'll see what we can do." He signals to Menzel to take the girl to her room.

Once Katelyn and Menzel have gone, the wizard continues:

"Ordinarily I would not be terribly concerned about what happens in Vaasa, the land where the girl and her parents were traveling. It is a treacherous, bog-filled place and rumored to be crawling with all sorts of fell creatures. I can't imagine why a blacksmith would expose his wife and child to such danger." He shakes his head in disbelief.

"Regardless, it worries me to hear a tale like Katelyn's. This does not sound like bandits, but more like the Cult of the Dragon, a sect of sinister people who ally with evil dragons in order to promote their eventual rule over all of us." He shudders.

"I frankly don't hold much hope for the girl's parents if they fell into the hands of the cult. But I am concerned if cult activities are going on near our eastern border. I'm not the king, duke, or even mayor of this town, but I keep an eye on things as best I can. Actually, I'm supposed to be retired, but who will keep track of what the orcs and ogres are doing if I don't? And then to the west is the land of the Zhentarim, worshipers of that wretched new god, Cyric. They are always plotting and scheming. It takes a lot of my time to keep track of their latest shenanigans, not to mention who's fighting whom in orc land. Retirement indeed! Thar is insecure enough as it is, full of rogue orc and ogre tribes, nomadic bands, and rather independent miners, and if I had to do something to pull them all together to resist the Zhentarim, it would take some time.

"Thus, I'm asking you to do what you can for this poor girl. Enter Vaasa and find out what happened. Take her with you; after all, she should remember where her parents were captured. From what she has said, they were traveling by road, and the only path of any size leading this way is the Dead Man's Walk. If you can find where they were captured, at least it will be a start.

"If you do this for me and let me know in two weeks what you have found out, even if it is nothing, I will pay you each 200 gp, half now and the remainder payable when you return. What do you say?"

The PCs may want to bargain with Thusk, and he can be haggled up to 500 gp each plus whatever ordinary equipment they need. He warns the PCs, however, that at this time of year (midsummer), the bogs of Vaasa are thawed out and inhospitable; warriors in heavy armor or carrying lots of gear might find themselves rapidly sucked into quicksand. He has no magical assistance to offer the PCs except two potions of *healing*.

If the PCs object to taking a young girl back into Vaasa, Thusk says, "Well, I understand your concern, but that girl is resourceful. After all, she survived alone for days before she got here." If the PCs insist on leaving her, Thusk will reluctantly agree. Ultimately, it makes no difference, for once Katelyn learns that the PCs have left, she leaves Thusk's tower and follows the PCs' trail discreetly in the form of a sparrow, bobcat, or the like.

Finally, the wizard offers the PCs rooms for the evening. If they make out a list of what they want, Menzel will have it ready for them by 10 o'clock the next morning. (If the PCs put outrageous items like battering rams or flamethrowers on the list, Menzel just says that none were for sale.)

The Trip to Vaasa

On the following morning, Thusk serves a fine breakfast and escorts the PCs and Katelyn outside his keep. He has hired an escort of ten nomad riders, who are patiently waiting with mounts. The mage introduces the leader as Tartas, a warrior guide who will escort the PCs to the Thar-Vaasa border. The PCs may refuse the escort if they wish, but Thusk warns them that the fierce orc and ogre tribes in the area are less likely to attack a larger party.

Nomad riders (10): AL N; AC 7; MV 12 (dismounted); F 3; hp 16 each; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SZ M; XP 120; light lance, dagger, short composite bow, 20 arrows.

The nomads are a sullen and wild-looking lot, dressed in studded leather armor and furs. Tartas is about 6' tall and has intense brown eyes. He and the other nomads say little, but if the PCs are genuinely friendly, the escorts may speak when they pitch camp. They ask the PCs to travel quietly and avoid making fires while in the hills to prevent alerting the region's many orcs and ogres. If asked about Vaasa, they hiss and whisper, "Bad place. No one goes there. Why you go?"

If PCs travel without the escort, they will be attacked at least twice on the way to the border by ogre patrols. The ogres retreat once they take 50% casualties.

Ogre leader: INT low; AL CE; AC 3; MV 9; HD 7; hp 33; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (+6); SA +2 to attack rolls due to strength; SZ L (9' + tall); ML 12; XP 650; MM/272.

Ogres (14): INT low; AL CE; AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+1; hp 25 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (+6); SA +3 to attack rolls due to strength; SZ L (9' tall); ML 12; XP 270 each; MM/272. All the ogres are armed with spears or spiked clubs. They each have 1-6 gp and 5-20 sp. The leader wears a silver bracelet worth 35 gp.

After two days of hard travel along the narrow road leading through the Western Galenas, the PCs reach the high point of the pass. All that marks the border is a pile of five boulders stacked one atop another, with "Thar" and "Vaasa" written on either side of the top boulder. Tartas and the other nomads turn their mounts back to Glister at this point, wishing the adventurers luck and still wondering why anyone would be crazy enough to enter Vaasa.

After the nomads depart, Katelyn (if she was left behind) will show up, begging to tag along. She looks a little worn and dirty but none the worse for wear. She explains that she left Thusk's tower and followed the PCs' trail the whole time because she could not wait to see her parents again. She has a story ready for PCs who are suspicious about how a 12-year-old girl on foot kept up with mounted adventurers. She says that she kept traveling at night, getting only an hour or two of sleep. She shows them blistered feet (part of her human form) as proof.

As the PCs descend the eastern side of the West Galenas, they see that most of Vaasa is covered with fog. Despite occasional clear patches, the rest of the terrain remains hidden. By the end of the day, the heroes reach the foot of the mountains and descend into the fog. Immediately they notice the stench of a bog full of rotted wood. Katelyn remarks that they have truly entered Vaasa.

Into Vaasa

Vaasa is an evil place replete with marsh, rotting vegetation, unwholesome smells, and many predatory monsters. The Dead Man's Walk, the only road, is muddy and full of potholes. The sounds of buzzing mosquitoes and horseflies are a constant drone, and their bites are a constant, painful nuisance. Mounted PCs notice that as sorry as this road is, the treacherous swampy ground on either side is far worse. Suggested random encounters and their frequency are enumerated in the sidebar.

The Ambush

Five miles from the foothills the PCs encounter a patrol of Ring-nose orcs (so named for the iron rings in their noses) that have fallen in with the Cult of the Dragon. Malunko Segrerd, a half-orc warrior Cult member, is the orcs' military advisor. He is mounted on Zzygarn, a small black dragon.

The patrol's mission is to intimidate and draft any travelers into joining the Cult. If PCs take precautions, they should discover the ambush; for instance, a PC druid in animal form or a wizard's familiar might scout ahead, or a ranger might spot the ambush while shadowing the PCs' flank. If the PCs discover the ambush, they may bypass it quietly or try taking the ambushers by surprise.

If the PCs walk right into the ambush, read the following:

> Suddenly, two stout orcs with rings in their noses step out into the roadway 20 yards in front of you. They wear rusty chain mail and steel helmets, and they carry wooden shields painted with a black circle. They are armed with wicked-looking black pikes and swords. One of them grunts out in broken common: "Okay, dat's far enuf! Drop yer stuff and ye won't get stuck. We's here to take ye in, uh, so ye can join us. No trouble, now! Be quick, drop stuff!"
>
> You hear the rustle of brush to your left and right and see about two dozen more orcs, all camouflaged with mud, sticks, and leaves, rising from hiding positions. They all have arrows nocked and pointed at you.

PCs who surrender are approached by orcs with chains and manacles, imprisoned, and taken to the ruins of Moortown. In the ruins, they are "indoctrinated" by Marlaxit-Tharg, the cult leader left on duty, with the persuasive assistance of Flameshoot the red dragon. (See "Ruins of Moortown" for details.) Those who agree to become cult members are kept in custody with the wounded orcs until the other cult members return. Their equipment is stored behind the bar of the inn in Moortown. Those who refuse are fed to the dragon hatchlings.

Katelyn wants no part of surrendering and encourages the PCs to fight first. ("Come on, you're heroes, aren't you? You're not going to let a few orcs get in our way, are you?") PCs who wish to play along with the orcs can convince Katelyn quietly to go along with it. Katelyn agrees reluctantly, secure in the knowledge that if she absolutely must, she can shapechange to escape. On the march to Moortown, Katelyn disappears (turning herself into a small snake that slithers off the road quickly); she may reappear later to rescue the PCs.

If the PCs refuse to surrender, the orcs attack to kill the PCs and get their equipment. Use the following suggested battle sequence.

Round 1: The orcs have drawn bows and nocked arrows, so they get the first shot automatically, shooting arrows evenly among the adventurers. After the PCs react, the orcs send a second round of arrows into the PCs. The orc shaman is hiding behind bushes, but he helps his troops by casting his *silence*

15' radius at any PC who looks like a spellcaster. The orc lieutenant and his guard get off the road. Malunko and Zzygarn, hidden before the ambush, lift off and approach the PCs.

PCs moving around the ambush site may fall into one of several 10'-deep pit traps scattered in the area, suffering 1d6 damage. Getting out is difficult because orc warriors with pikes will try to keep captives in. It takes just one round to climb out, but if an orc pikeman successfully hits AC 10, the PC is pushed back into the pit.

Round 2: Roll initiative normally. Orcs not engaged in melee shoot arrows. Malunko has Zzygarn strafe as many PCs as possible with acid. The orc shaman casts a *darkness* spell on a PC spellcaster.

Round 3: All the orcs stop shooting and charge. Malunko and Zzygarn land and engage the toughest-looking fighter. Katelyn, who has been hiding in the woods, jumps behind the orc shaman and changes briefly to breathe on him (out of the PCs' sight).

Round 4+: Melee continues until the PCs are all captured or dead or the orcs' morale breaks.

Orcs (20): INT average; AL LE; AC 6 (4 under cover); MV 9; HD 1; hp 6 each; THAC0 19; #AT by weapon type; Dmg by weapon type; SD partial cover from their firing positions confers AC 4; SZ M; ML 11; XP 35 each; short bows, pikes, and short swords.

Orc leader: As above except AC 4, hp 8, long sword.

Orc shaman: As above except HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; XP 120. He wields a rusty mace.

Malunko (half-orc cult fighter): AL LE; AC 4; MV 12 (dismounted); F5; hp 45; THAC0 16; #AT 3/2 with long sword: Dmg 1-8; SA specialized with long sword; S 17 (+1/+1), D 15, C 15, I 14, W 9, Ch 8; SZ M; XP 270.

Zzygarn (young black dragon): INT average; AL CE; AC 3; MV 12, fly 30 (C), swim 12; HD 8; hp 39; THAC0 7; #AT 3 or breath; Dmg 1-6/1-6/3-18; SA breath usable every third round (4d4+2 acid); SD immune to acid, can breathe water; SZ 15' long total; ML 16; XP 5,000; MM/65.

None of the monsters have any treasure. If any orcs are captured, they tell much the same story as the wounded orcs in Moortown; that is, they claim they were forced to go to war by the Cult. They offer to help the PCs free their comrades in Moortown, but if the PCs get involved in a battle the orcs flee as soon as the wounded dragon Flameshoot goes on a rampage. (See "The Ruins of Moortown" for details.) If Malunko is captured, he will refuse to say anything—he knows what grisly fate his fellow cult members will inflict on him if he reveals their secrets. Even a *charm person* spell cannot get him to open up.

Decomposing Dragons

On the next day, the PCs stumble on the following sight:

> As you walk through this dreary land, you suddenly catch the whiff of a strong, vile odor wafting your way, far worse than the smell of the swamps. As you come around a bend you see an awesome sight, the carrion remains of a decomposed dragon suspended in the trees. The tops of the thick trees poke through the upper portion of the dragon's body, as if it fell from the sky and was impaled. Vultures and crows feast on the rotted remains where the dragon's scales have been pierced or torn away. The beast's scales appear to be a greenish white. Just beside the road is a large rock with an inscription. Some 100' deeper into the swamp, you see the remains of another dragon, this one greenish-gray in color.

The white dragon is the one Glimmerfang drove into the earth. Careful inspection shows huge bite marks on its neck and rips in its wings (where Glimmerfang grasped it). The scales now have a greenish tinge from the growth of fungi. Many of the exposed areas are not wounds, but are the result of cult members tearing off the scales to make armor.

The crows and vultures can be easily shooed away, but they return to resume their feasting as soon as the PCs leave. It's just a matter of time until wild dogs and other predators find the carcass. When the remains fall to the ground, the dogs will tear it apart.

The symbol chiseled into the rock is a dragon claw grasping a crown (the symbol of the Cult of the Dragon), and the stone bears this inscription:

> Here lies Frostnax, warrior and champion of white dragons, who gave her life for the benefit of all dragonkind. Long may your bravery be remembered. May all who pass this way pay reverence and reflect on whether they are as worthy as she was. Frostnax, you will be missed.

Katelyn looks at this inscription and spits on it. When she sees the other dragon body farther back in the swamp, she starts splashing over to it. Nothing will dissuade her from reaching it, and if anyone tries to physically prevent her from wading in, she will snarl, "Just leave me alone. I want to see."

The other dragon is Glimmerfang and is also crawling with carrion birds on its upper body. This dragon has many wounds, and its head is missing. Trees and bushes all around it have been torn up and knocked down. Some of the trees are splattered with dragon blood, the aftermath of the battle between Glimmerfang and the red dragon that killed her.

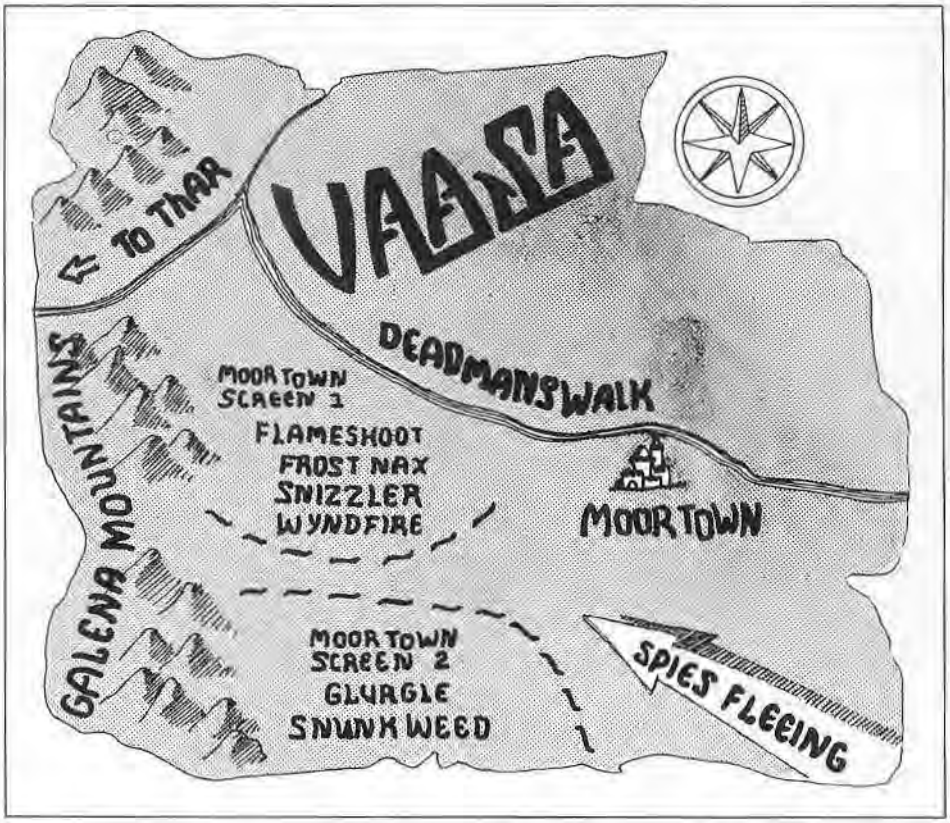
When Katelyn gets close to it, she yells, "Get off her! Go away!" and starts throwing sticks at the birds, driving them squawking into the air. Her yells are heard by three giant boring beetles feasting on the other side of the body; they come to investigate the noise.

Boring beetles (3): INT animal; AL N; AC 3; MV 6; HD 5; hp 35 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 5-20; SZ L (9' long); ML 14; XP 270; MM/18.

On the third round of combat with the beetles, the swampy water swirls and a mud-covered human body emerges. It wears scaly armor and a helm fashioned like a dragon head, and it attacks the PCs. This is Grognar, a cult member who was knocked off one of the cult's dragons in the battle with Forge and Glimmerfang. He fell 500' to earth and landed in a pool of quicksand where he sank and drowned. After the battle, cult members searched high and low for Grognar but were unable to find him.

As he drowned, Grognar cursed his foul luck and wished he could have had one more chance at them. What he did not know was that he carried a *luck blade* with one *wish* on it, and the *wish* was fulfilled as soon as the one remaining steel dragon, Katelyn, came close. However, Grognar is now a ghast, not the human warrior he once was.

As he attacks, he roars in a gurgling voice, "You again! Now I will have you!" He will try to get to Katelyn, who will defend herself in a berserk fury (+1 to her attack roll) with her short sword.



Handout 1

Grognar (ghast): INT very; AL CE; AC 4; MV 15; HD 4; hp 30; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8; SA paralysis touch, carrion stench; SD not affected by *sleep* or *charm*; SZ M; ML N/A; XP 975; MM/131.

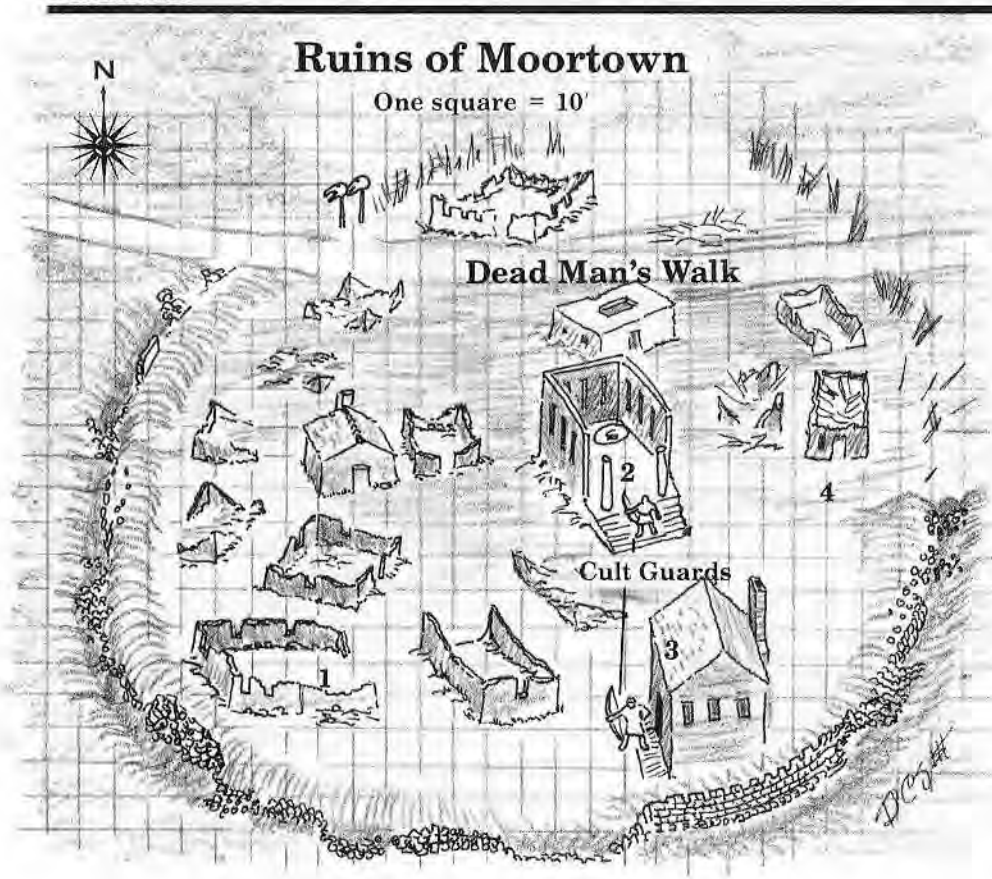
Since Grognar has only this one chance for his revenge, he is focused on Katelyn and ignores all attempts to turn him unless a holy symbol is thrust right in his face. Even then, the PC making the attempt suffers a −2 penalty to his turning attempt.

Successfully turning Grognar, however, breaks the *wish*'s power utterly. Grognar collapses with a groan into a putrid mass, totally destroyed.

Once the beetles and Grognar have been dealt with, the PCs may search through the remains. The beetles have no treasure, but Grognar wears a *ring of infravision*. A *long sword, luck blade +2* (all *wishes* used) rests 15' deep in the quicksand; the PCs must be ingenious to find it, perhaps carefully triangulating its location with a *detect magic* spell. At Grognar's side is a bone map tube, still sealed. It contains a tactical map that Grognar was given while searching for the steel dragons (see Player Handout 1 above). This should help the PCs find the Cult.

PCs who search the area and make an Intelligence ability check at a −7 penalty notice yet another dragon body 300' deeper into the swamp, barely visible through the trees and bushes. If they investigate, they find the body of Forge in the same condition as Glimmerfang's: rotted, fluttering with winged scavengers, and beheaded. Again signs of battle are all about (burnt trees, smashed timber, crushed bushes).

At Forge's corpse, the PCs may notice a clear, 20'-wide trail that winds back to the Dead Man's Road. Trees have been knocked aside, stumps are uprooted, and bushes are crushed. The red dragon Flameshoot created this path as he staggered away from the battle, terribly wounded by Forge. Even after worried cult members forced four potions of *healing* down his throat, Flameshoot still could not fly and had to walk back to Moortown. The trees and bushes that



were in his path are still stained with Flameshoot's dried blood and with bits of gore from the steel dragon heads that the cult members carried off as trophies.

At this point, Katelyn is sobbing quietly to herself and does not say much. PCs may well ask her what is wrong, what the undead meant when it said "You, again!" and why she should care about a pair of beheaded dragons. Though Katelyn is upset at the sight of her dead parents, she says, "I think he was one of the bandits who took my parents away. These dragons, well . . . they just seemed so brave, and it's awful that they have to rot like this."

Astute PCs may realize that Katelyn is not exactly who she says she is and may guess at her identity. If they put together the pieces and explain their accusation, Katelyn admits her identity and begs for help. If the PCs refuse, she mentions that her parents had valuable information about the Cult of the Dragon and the Zhentarim, and that all of humankind (whom she dearly loves) needs to be warned of whatever it is. Katelyn/Steelheart encourages the PCs to go with her to Moortown to learn more. If the PCs refuse, the adventure is over (as will be the freedom of the people of Thar).

The Ruins of Moortown

Eventually the PCs should reach Moortown, an outpost of the Cult of the Dragon. Years ago, Moortown was founded by an expedition of pioneers as a trading post midway on the route to the Bloodstone mines. The effort to colonize the marshes failed utterly when the Vaasan swamps' evil inhabitants and harsh life overcame the settlers. The town's intact buildings are occupied by members of the cult and their allies.

Moortown was once enclosed totally by a wooden palisade. When the town fell, about half of the palisade had been replaced by an earthen and stone wall, much of which has eroded. Only a few rotted poles show where the wooden palisade once stood. Two new poles, freshly erected, display the heads of Forge and Glimmerfang.

Patrolling Moortown's perimeter are three trolls. Flameshoot gave these trolls and three others (currently out hunting to feed the hatchlings) a demonstration of his fiery breath. Terrified by fire, the trolls agreed that it would be smart to become the dragon's allies and do whatever the Cult wanted. They don't eat as well as they once did, and if they spot the PCs (50% chance if the adventurers blunder into the ruins) they will happily attack to get fresh meat. The other inhabitants pay no attention to the noise of battle since the trolls are always making a racket and quarreling, but if the PCs cast loud, thunderous spells (*fireball, lightning bolt, shout*), the cultists will be alert and waiting.

Trolls (3): INT low; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 6+6; hp 41, 34, 29; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 5-8/5-8/5-12; SA severed limbs continue to attack; SD regeneration; SZ L (9'); ML 14; XP 1,400 each; MM/349.

Currently most cultists and dragons garrisoning this outpost have gone away to negotiate with the Zhentarim delegation on the details of the upcoming alliance. Only a few guards have been left behind to tend the wounded Flameshoot (area 1) and keep watch over the new red dragon hatchlings (area 2). Very few natural predators lurk in the buildings of Moortown because most have been captured to feed the hatchlings or the troll sentries. Each deserted building (unnumbered on the map) that the PCs enter has 5% chance to contain a nest of giant rats or hairy spiders that have eluded the trolls.

Giant rats (1-12): INT semi; AL NE; AC 7; MV 12, swim 6; HD ½; hp 1-4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA disease; SZ T (2' long); ML 5; XP 15 each; MM/300.

Hairy spiders (1-20): INT low; AL NE; AC 8; MV 12, web 9; HD 1-1; hp 5 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison (save vs. poison with +2 bonus or have AC and THAC0 penalized by 1 and Dexterity by 3); SZ T (6" diameter); ML 10; XP 65 each; MM/326.

1. Warehouse. A large warehouse with a collapsed roof and broken-down walls houses Flameshoot, one of the red dragons that fought with Forge. Even though members of the outpost gave him all four of their *healing* potions, Flameshoot still can't fly and is recuperating here. Slowly healing claw and bite wounds can still be seen on his body. The cult hopes to negotiate access to Zhentarim clerics who can heal the hurt beast.

As long as the PCs have not made any loud noises, Flameshoot remains sound asleep. Katelyn suggests in an anxious whisper that the PCs quietly approach and catch him by surprise as he sleeps; she even offers to lead the way, if none of the PCs are brave enough. When the PCs remind her that they are looking for her parents, not on a dragon-hunting expedition, Katelyn looks blank for a moment, and then says, "Oh . . . yeah. You're right! Gee, I wonder where they could be?"

Disturbing the dragon gets the PCs in a real fight. Although it is not bothered by squabbling trolls, Flameshoot does listen for disturbed cries from the hatchlings and signal whistles from the guards. Once roused, it stomps off toward the uproar, annoyed that its recovery has been disrupted and silently promising hell to pay if it is a false alarm. When it sees the PCs, it attacks fearlessly and fights to the death.

Flameshoot (adult red dragon): INT exceptional; AL CE; AC −5; MV 9, fly 30 (C), jump 3; HD 17; hp 41 (101); THAC0 5; #AT 3; Dmg 1-10+6/1-10+6/3-30+6; SA breath weapon (12d10+6) usable every three rounds, 20-yard-radius *fear* aura; SD immune to fire; MR 35%; SZ G (155′ long); ML 17; XP 15,000. Spells: *charm person, hypnotism; web.* Magical abilities: *affect normal fires* (3/day), *pyrotechnics* (3/day), *heat metal* (1/day).

2. Hatchlings' Nursery. Three small red dragons, hatched a few months ago, are kept in this abandoned stone building that was once a temple. Lots of bones and bits of fur litter the area. The hatchlings are active during daylight hours, quarreling and playing with the stone head that was broken off a statue of Tempus. Although noisy, they have a special cry that will wake Flameshoot when they are endangered, but it will not alert the cult members in the other parts of town.

A cult guard watches over the dragons to ensure that they do not leave the premises. The hatchlings were instructed by their parents, Wyndfire and Snizzler, to obey the cult guards and not harm them. Wyndfire and Snizzler are currently escorting the cult members who are meeting the Zhentarim.

PCs approaching quietly to investigate the snarling and snorting ruckus in this building can do so safely from any direction except north. From any other direction, the PCs gain a +1 chance to surprise the hatchlings, which are engrossed in their games and tussles.

If they approach from the north, the gentle breeze from that direction carries the PCs' scent downwind to the hatchlings, who wander over to investigate the new scent. When they see the PCs, they become curious and hop out of the windows; the cult guard runs after them to shoo them back in. The guard grabs the signal whistle hanging from his neck and blows it shrilly, rousing Flameshoot, every cultist in the ruins, and the three trolls walking the perimeter. Flameshoot arrives after three rounds, the cultists after five, and the trolls after eight.

Red dragon hatchlings (3): INT exceptional; AL CE; AC 0; MV 9, fly 30 (C), jump 3; HD 9; hp 40 each; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 1-10+1/1-10+1/3-30+1; SA breath weapon (2d10+1) usable every three rounds; SD immune to fire; SZ L (20′ long); ML 17; XP 7,000 each.

Mristin (human guard): AL LE; AC 4; MV 12; F3; hp 27; THAC0 18; #AT 3/2 with long sword; Dmg by weapon type; SA specialized with long sword; S 16 (+1 damage), D 15, C 13, I 12, W 11, Ch 12; SZ M; XP 175. In addition to his long sword, the guard carries a short composite bow, 20 sheaf arrows, and a dagger. In his pouch are 35 gp and 14 sp.

A thorough search of the temple reveals a secret trap door covered by rubble. The trap door leads to a small basement where the clerics of Tempus kept their healing magic. When the cult members moved in, they searched only for things that might hurt the newly hatched dragons, not for treasure, so they missed this nice cache of healing magic. It includes a *rod of resurrection* (with 11 charges left), five potions of *healing,* a scroll with two *cure critical wounds* spells and one *cure disease* (at 12th level), and a jar of *Keoghtom's ointment* (two applications).

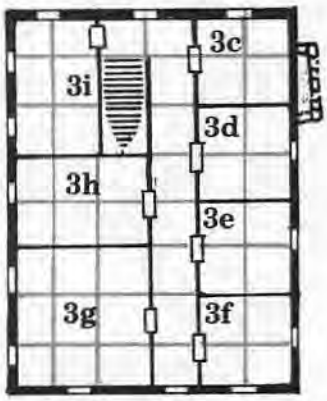
3. Cult Headquarters. The timeworn paint on the sign of this building proclaims that it was once the Swamphouse Inn. The Cult has made its headquarters in this two-story brick building, one of the few intact buildings left in town.

One cult guard stands sentry on the

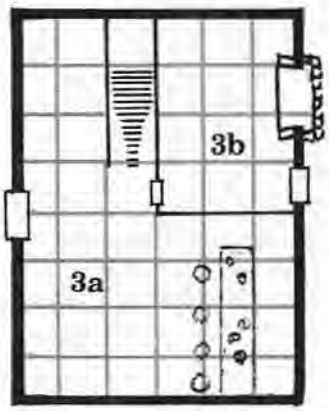
Swamphouse Inn

One square = 10'

Upper Floor



Lower Floor



porch, beside the front door. He is dressed in chain mail armor with greenish-white large scales (from the dead white dragon) attached here and there, and his shield is likewise covered. Around his neck he wears a signal whistle. If he spots the PCs, he will blow the whistle to bring the other denizens of Moortown to his aid.

Argrath (human guard): AL LE; AC 2; MV 12; F3; hp 27; THAC0 18; #AT 3/2 with long sword; Dmg by weapon type; SA specialized with long sword; S 17 (+1, +1), D 15; SZ M; XP 175; dragon scale armor, shield, long sword, short composite bow, 20 sheaf arrows, and a dagger.

3a. Dining Room. The main room of the inn has been cleaned by the cult members and is used for dining, but it is otherwise unremarkable. If the PCs are captured, their gear will be stored behind the bar.

3b. Kitchen. A woman wearily toils in the kitchen cooking the next meal for the few cultists who remain in town. Her name is Sarahla, and she hails from the outskirts of Mulmaster. She was captured in a raid last year by cult members and has been a kitchen slave ever since. Sarahla is about 25 years old and homely, but she cooks well. She pines for her freedom and has prayed nightly to her deity for a "saviour," but her prayers have not been answered. Sarahla knows better than to try to escape on her own; the dragons would quickly and ruthlessly track her down.

When she sees the PCs, she is radiant with joy and dubs the burliest human fighter as her saviour. Sarahla will not want him to leave her, no matter how dangerous the circumstances.

Sarahla knows that most of the cult members took off to the southwest a few days ago with two red and two black dragons. She does not know why they left or when they will return. She also knows where Flameshoot and the hatchlings keep their lairs. She absolutely loathes the trolls and orcs, who bring her game to cook. She knows nothing about Katelyn's parents or any other prisoners brought here except herself.

If the PCs are taken prisoner, Sarahla will sneak over to them and try to free them. After all, she expects she will owe her saviour a great deal when they escape together.

Sarahla (0-level human): AL NG; AC 10; hp 5. She can wield a kitchen knife for 1-3 hp damage.

3c-3f. Bedrooms. These spartan bedrooms were used by cult members when Moortown was fully garrisoned, but they now stand unoccupied. They have nothing in them but bare floors; even the old, rotted beds and smaller furnishings have been broken up for firewood.

3g. Marlaxit-Tharg. This bedroom is occupied by Marlaxit-Tharg, a half-elven fighter/mage who was left in command of the cult's small garrison. Currently he is busy transcribing scrolls into his spellbook, and he has given orders not to be disturbed unless it is an emergency. When the PCs walk down the creaking hall, he hears them and calls out in an irritated voice, "Did I not say to stay away so I could concentrate? What is the matter? Was I unclear?"

If he gets no answer (or a suspicious one) he opens the door to see who it is. Once he sees the PCs, he slams the door, wedges it shut with a dagger, and yells an alarm out the window to the sentry. Then he arms himself and prepares spells.

PCs trying to batter down the door must make a successful open doors roll at a −1 penalty. When the door bursts open, Marlaxit casts his *stinking cloud* into the hallway and jumps out the window, using his *feather fall* spell.

By blowing his whistle, Marlaxit-Tharg brings the rest of the garrison to his aid. He sends the trolls through the back door. He also asks Flameshoot to tear down the front of the building to get at the PCs, but he warns the dragon not to use his breath because of the trolls. Flameshoot complies, automatically tearing down one room's outside wall each round. As he does this, Marlaxit and the remaining guards wait out front, keeping the hatchling dragons back. As PCs emerge from the building, they are targeted by the half-elf's *magic missile* spells. If the PCs close to melee, he uses his *mirror image* spell.

Marlaxit (half-elf cult leader): AL LE; AC 4; MV 12; F6/W4; hp 45; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; S 13, D 17, C 16, I 14, W 12, Ch 13; MR 30% resistance to *sleep* and *charm* spells; SZ M;

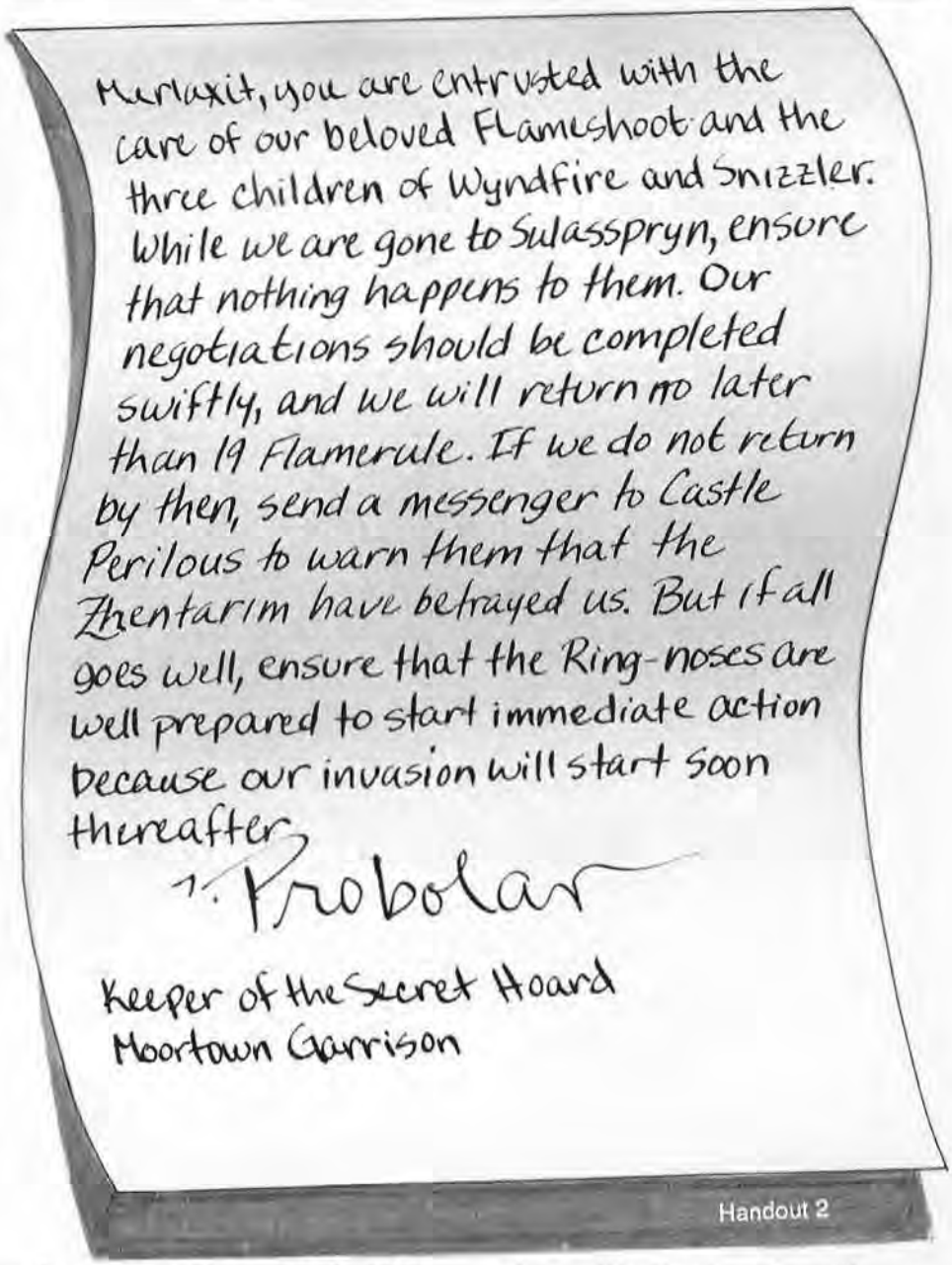
XP 2,000. Spells: *feather fall, magic missile* (×2); *mirror image, stinking cloud.*

Marlaxit carries a *long sword +1, +2 vs. good creatures*, and he wears a *ring of protection +2*. His spellbook contains (in addition to the spells carried) *audible glamer, ventriloquism, hypnotism, shocking grasp, flaming sphere, misdirection*, and half of a *levitate* spell. Next to the spellbook is an inkwell, quill pen, and two scrolls. In the closet is a backpack stuffed with ordinary adventuring equipment, a long bow, 20 sheaf arrows, and a small, rolled rug.

The first scroll is inscribed with *rope trick* and the second half of the *levitate* spell already partially written in Marlaxit's spellbook. A PC mage who can understand these spells (per Table 4, *Player's Handbook*) can finish transcribing them into the spellbook. The *levitate* spell cannot be memorized until it is fully written in the book. A special ink is required to write in the spellbook. The ink remaining in the well is enough to write eight more spells.

The second scroll contains Marlaxit's written orders. A copy of his orders is provided as Player Handout 2, the scroll reproduced on this page and meant to be handed to the players.

The rolled up rug is a 6′ × 9′ *carpet of flying* that can carry up to four persons. A PC who looks intently at the carpet's intricate weave may discern the command words cleverly woven into the design (Intelligence check with −3 penalty to notice, but the PC must be able to read). When the owner recites specific words, the carpet will hover, fly, go left, go right, fly faster, and stop. The carpet has a maximum airspeed of 24 miles per hour.


Marlaxit, you are entrusted with the care of our beloved Flameshoot and the three children of Wyndfire and Snizzler. While we are gone to Sulasspryn, ensure that nothing happens to them. Our negotiations should be completed swiftly, and we will return no later than 19 Flamerule. If we do not return by then, send a messenger to Castle Perilous to warn them that the Zhentarim have betrayed us. But if all goes well, ensure that the Ring-noses are well prepared to start immediate action because our invasion will start soon thereafter.
T. Probolar
Keeper of the Secret Hoard
Moortown Garrison
Handout 2

3h&i. Bedrooms. Deserted like the other rooms on this floor, these two contain the backpacks and bedrolls of the guards in the stable (area 4) and the hatchery (area 2). They have nothing but ordinary adventuring gear, though the DM may add other unusual items to help struggling or under-equipped PCs.

4. Stable. This deserted stable serves as the barracks for the Ring-nose war patrol and their cult adviser (see "The Ambush"). It is dirty and wretched. Since the war patrol is out in the swamps, only five female orcs remain to tend the two wounded males that lie on filthy patches of straw. The orcs can be easily surprised (+3 bonus to the PCs' surprise rolls) and will quickly surrender, since they stand no chance against the well-armed PCs.

If one of the PCs can speak orcish or can translate the orcs' speech magically, the orcs explain how the Cult of the Dragon took over the Ring-nose tribe, by killing their chieftain, intimidating the other warriors with dragons, and putting them under the command of a military half-orc adviser who rides a small black dragon. All they know is that they are being trained for ambushes and shock attacks because they will soon be going to war in Thar, where there will be plunder aplenty. The orcs have grudgingly gone along with this plan, but the more experienced among them know that many ogres live in Thar. They do not look forward to fighting the mighty and ferocious ogres.

The two wounded orcs reacted too slowly to orders from the Cult adviser, and so he made examples of them in front of the other troops by pitting them against the black dragon armed with nothing more than clubs. Both orcs were wounded badly in the rush of the dragon's first attack. The adviser laughingly stopped his mount from killing them as a gesture of "mercy."

The Zhentarim

The negotiating team is led by Cyricson Moltar, a high priest of Cyric from Zhentil Keep. Cyricson was given strict instructions to agree to nothing less than half of Thar as the Zhentarim share of the alliance. He intends to be quite hardheaded about these demands, because he was told that if he could get anything above half of Thar, he would be greatly rewarded. Cyricson was not given any details, but he will push to put at least 60% of Thar under the sway of the Zhentarim. If the PCs do not interfere, he will eventually negotiate down to 50% and the bargain will be sealed.

Cyricson is a dashingly handsome human in his late 20s and is a fast riser in the Black Network. His engaging smile and perfect white teeth have sealed many bargains for the Zhentarim before, most of which have been broken. Cyricson is cruel and harbors no love for the Cult, but he is a pragmatist, biding his time before plunging a long sword into an ally's back.

Cyricson Moltar (human priest of Cyric): AL NE; AC 0; MV 12; C11; hp 68; THAC0 14; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; S 16, D 15, C 15, I 13, W 18, Ch 16; SZ M; XP 9,000. Spells: *bless, detect good, detect magic, faerie fire* (×2), *light, protection from evil* (already cast); *barkskin, charm person or mammal, chill metal, dust devil, flame blade, silence 15' radius; cause blindness* (×2), *dispel magic, magical vestment* (already cast), *protection from fire* (already cast); *control temperature 10' radius, cure serious wounds* (×2), *protection from lightning* (already cast); *quest, rainbow; blade barrier.*

Special abilities: Summon aerial servant 1/day, immune to fear and emotion altering magic.

Cyricson wears purple robes that conceal his *long sword +3, +4 vs. scaly creatures.* His solid platinum holy symbol is plainly visible, and the high cleric uses this symbol to control his aerial servant. While negotiating, he firmly grips his *wand of flame extinguishing* (33 charges) lest the red dragons flare up in anger.

Aerial servant: INT semi; AL N; AC 3; MV fly 24 (A); HD 16; hp 100; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 8d4 (but the servant will not fight for the summoner, see *PH* page 226); SD +1 or better weapon to hit; *invisible*; SZ L (8' tall); ML 14; XP 10,000; MM/101 (Elemental, air kin).

Cyricson will command the aerial servant to grab a cult leader, take him out to sea, and then dump him in the ocean to drown. This avoids breaking the letter (but not the spirit) of his agreement not to send to the servant into combat.

Three lesser specialty priests of Cyric accompany Cyricson. His consort is Melithua, a tanned, sweet-looking woman with steel gray hair and soft doelike eyes. Like Cyricson and the other priests, she wears silver bracelets that symbolize her servitude to her deity. Her innocent looks belie her extreme cruelty—she never shows mercy to the enemies of the Prince of Lies.

Melithua (human priestess of Cyric): AL NE; AC 4; MV 12; C7; hp 50; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 16, C 16, I 12, W 17, Ch 12; SZ M; XP 2,000; *longsword +2*. Spells: *bless, detect magic, faerie fire, light* (×2), *protection from evil* (already cast); *barkskin, charm person or mammal, chill metal, silence 15' radius* (×2); *dispel magic, magical vestment* (already cast), *protection from fire* (already cast); *cure serious wounds*. Special ability: Summon aerial servant 1/day.

Melithua has already summoned her aerial servant; it is hovering *invisibly* above and behind the dragons. It has the same statistics as Cyricson's servant.

Like all priests of Cyric, Melithua is immune to fear and emotion altering magic. She wears purple robes with black trim. While Cyricson is negotiating, she remains silent, poised to cast a *silence* spell at the first mage or dragon that even looks like they may be casting something.

The last two priests of Cyric are guards for Cyricson and Melithua. They look tough and proudly display the symbol of the Prince of Lies on their plain black robes.

Smolitung (human priest of Cyric): AL NE; AC 4; MV 12; C3; hp 24; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; S 17, D 17, C 15, I 11, W 16, Ch 10; SZ M; XP 175. Spells: *bless* (×2), *faerie fire, light; charm person or mammal, chill metal, silence 15' radius.*

Smolitung openly carries a *shield +1* and a *deathkiss mace +1* (new item). The end of this weapon is a small brass skull. Each time it hits it has a 1% cumulative chance to slay its victim. Smolitung is immune to fear and emotion altering magic.

Smolitung is muscular and has a handsome face marred by a wicked scar running down the left side. This came from a close encounter with a young dragon a year ago; only the stroke of the *deathkiss mace* saved Smolitung's hide that day. He believes his weapon is specially blessed to kill dragons. In a battle he will foolishly rush in and strike confidently at the dragons.

Briemulk (human priest of Cyric): AL NE; AC 6; MV 12; C2; hp 15; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 16, C 14, I 11, W 15, Ch 11; SZ M; XP 175; *long sword +1*. Spells: *bless, faerie fire* (×2), *light.* Briemulk is immune to fear and emotion-altering magic.

Briemulk is a mousy fellow with homely looks and scraggly brown hair. He is a fanatic who looks forward to meeting his god. If Cyricson is seriously threatened, Briemulk will throw himself between the attacker and Cyricson to protect his master.

The Zhent troops are represented in Sulasspryn by 30 battle-hardened veterans who waded ashore with the four priests of Cyric. These heavily armored soldiers were chosen for their fanatical loyalty and proven worth in combat. Before coming ashore, they were blessed by the priests and they feel fairly safe, knowing that their comrades aboard ship can kill one of the dragons easily (see below). For the moment they are not subject to the dragon's *fear* aura—until they see one attack.

Zhentarim soldiers (30): INT average; AL NE; AC 2; MV 9; F4; hp 30 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 damage due to Strength; SZ M; ML 14; XP 175 each; plate mail, shields, spears, long swords.

Reserve troops wait just offshore in the Zhentarim galley: 30 archers and 35 sailors. The archers all keep their long bows strung to shoot in case of treachery. The galley has four ballistae, manned by sailors. One of the ballistae is loaded with a specially enchanted *bolt of dragonslaying*. The ballistae crews are experts, and the weapons are aimed at the dragons. Ballistae crews have a THAC0 of 12, and the bolts inflict 3d10 hp damage. The enchanted ballista bolt has a +3 bonus to hit and automatically kills any dragon it strikes. Ballistae fire once every 4 rounds.

Zhent archers (30): Statistics as the soldiers on shore, but AC 6; #AT 2 or 1; XP 270; long swords and long bows.

Zhent sailors (35): AL NE; AC 7; MV 12; F1; hp 9 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SZ M; XP 35 each; leather armor, shields, ballista, cutlass, dagger.

The Cult of the Dragon

The negotiating team of cult members is led by Probolar, a 15th-level mage who is one of the "Keepers of the Secret Hoard," a term reserved for cult members in high leadership positions. Probolar has been instructed by his superiors to get an agreement that strengthens the alliance and gives no more than half of Thar to the Zhentarim after it has been crushed. Probolar starts by insisting that the dragons get three-fourths of Thar and first pick of all ogres captured for cult troops, but he will back down to ceding half to Zhentil Keep.

Probolar (human cult leader): AL LE; AC 1; MV 12; W15; hp 45; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 12; D 17; C 15; I 18; W 13; Ch 13; SZ M; XP 10,000. Spells: *burning hands, color spray, magic missile* (×3); *blindness, flaming sphere* (×2), *mirror image, web; fireball* (×3), *hold person, protection from normal missiles* (already cast); *fire shield, massmorph, minor globe of invulnerability, shout, wall of fire; Bigby's interposing hand, cloudkill, monster summoning III* (×2), *telekinesis; monster summoning IV, Tenser's transformation; prismatic spray.*

Probolar wears a *ring of dragons* on one hand and a *ring of protection +3* on the other. He wears *bracers of defense AC 6* and carries a *wand of fire* (40 charges) at his side. The traveling spellbook in his backpack contains 20 levels of spells over and above what he has memorized (DM's call). In melee combat, Probolar strikes with a carved dragon-headed *staff +3* that can shoot a flame equivalent to *burning hands* (1/day at 15th level of ability).

The *ring of dragons* (from DRAGON® Magazine #110, page 11) allows the wearer to send out a mental call to all evil dragons on the same plane. It pinpoints the wearer's location to these dragons. Additionally, the person wearing the ring can speak any dragon tongue and can communicate telepathically with a true dragon. Finally, he can also cast an illusion of a dragon once per day. This illusion appears and makes sounds but cannot harm anyone.

Probolar looks about 60 years old, worn and weathered by the stresses of constant intrigue. The forms of various evil dragons have been tattooed all over his bald head. His robes are a blend of black and light red, and a 250-gp gold medallion of a dragon claw grasping a crown hangs around his neck.

Probolar has brought his best fighter and ten guards with him. The three strongest guards are doing outpost duty; the seven lesser warriors guard his person. All are fanatical in their devotion to Probolar personally and the cult as a whole.

Sentries (3): AL LE; AC 4; MV 12; F4; hp 36, 33, 30; THAC0 18; #AT 2 with long sword; Dmg by weapon type; S 17 (+1, +1), D 16, C 16; SA specialized with long sword; SZ M; XP 420 each; long swords, short composite bows, 20 sheaf arrows, daggers.

Guards (7): AL LE; AC 4; MV 12; F3; hp 27, 24 (×3), 22 (×2), 21; THAC0 18; #AT 3/2 with long sword; Dmg by weapon type; SA specialized with long sword; SZ M; XP 175; long swords, short composite bows, 20 sheaf arrows, daggers. Each guard carries 5-50 gp and 3-30 sp.

Unguentane Fierolo is Probolar's best fighter, and he looks the part. Decked out in black dragon armor that covers his muscular frame, he wears a bronzed helmet fashioned from an ogre skull and carries two blackened steel khopesh swords that match his armor (both +1 enchanted weapons). He wears a *ring of flying* and a *ring of water walking*. The other cult soldiers obey him swiftly.

Unguentane is very distrustful of the Zhentarim, because they took his mother away in a raid long ago. PCs using an *ESP* spell should be able to detect this while negotiations are going on.

Unguentane (human male): AL LE; AC 0; MV 6; F9; hp 70; THAC0 12; #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; SA specialized with khopesh sword; S 18/66 (+2, +3), D 17, C 15, I 11, W 11, Ch 10; SZ M; XP 2,000; black dragon armor, shield.

In addition to his khopesh swords, Unguentane carries a long composite bow and a quiver of 20 *+1 flight arrows*. In his pouch are 3 pp, 36 gp, and 45 sp.

The four dragons that accompany the cult members are all quite evil, but have learned to get along with each other. The two reds, Wyndfire and Snizzler, are mates. Both suffered wounds in the battle with the steel dragons, but were well enough to add their imposing presence on this trip. The grievous slashing wounds they received from the steel dragons' claws have been healing slowly, and the pinkish scars and gray new scales are still quite visible. The two blacks, Glurgle and Snunkweed, know better than to antagonize the more powerful reds, but they are anxious to show off their skills. Neither of the black dragons was involved in the battle with Forge and Glimmerfang, so they are both in perfect health. All of the dragons are loyal to their cult allies because of the Cult's promises of great riches and power. Any Zhentarim move to harm the dragons or their cult allies will be met with fierce draconic revenge.

Wyndfire and Snizzler (mature adult red dragons): INT exceptional; AL CE; AC −6; MV 9, fly 30 (C), jump 3; HD 18; hp 99 (120), 85 (115); THAC0 5; #AT 3; Dmg 1-10+7/1-10+7/3-30+7; SA breath weapon (14d10+7) usable once every three rounds, *fear* aura (25 yard radius); SD immune to fire; MR 40%; SZ G (200′ long); ML 17; XP 16,000; MM/68.

Spells: *sleep, charm person; flaming sphere, locate object.* Magical abilities: *affect normal fires* (3/day), *pyrotechnics* (3/day), *heat metal* (1/day).

Glurgle and Snunkweed (young adult black dragons): INT average; AL CE; AC 0; MV 12, fly 30 (C); swim 12; HD 13; hp 85, 80; THAC0 7; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6+5/1-6+5/3-18+5; SA acid breath weapon (10d4+5) every three rounds, *fear* aura (15-yard radius); SD immune to acid, breathe water; MR 10%; SZ G (70′ long); ML 16; XP 13,000; MM/65.

Spells: *color spray, protection from good.* Magical abilities: *darkness 10′ radius* (6/day).

The orcs just want to be left alone and will happily disappear back into the swamps if the PCs do away with the other inhabitants of Moortown. The orcs don't desert because they fear that the cult members, with their dragons and trolls, would mercilessly hunt them down. Although evil, the orcs prefer to cooperate with the PCs rather than have anything to do with the cruelty of the cult's rule. They warn the adventurers about the trolls and tell the PCs where to find Flameshoot, the hatchlings, and the cult headquarters. The orcs have the same statistics as those in "The Ambush," but the wounded ones have 2 hp each and the females 5 hp each.

If the PCs are brought here as captives from the ambush, the war patrol leaves three orcs as guards, then returns to the swamps, looking for more victims.

Steelheart's True Form

Eventually the PCs should finish exploring the Moortown ruins. When they engage Flameshoot, Steelheart assumes her true form out of the PCs' sight, flies behind Flameshoot, and breathes her poison gas right onto the red dragon's head. This continues until either she or the PCs kill the dragon. Then she lands and assumes whatever form will help the PCs most (for example, if the PCs are battling Marlaxit, she could land behind him, take the form of a tiger, and pounce on him from behind).

When the battle is over, the young steel dragon approaches the PCs peacefully, reassuring them that she is a friend. She says:

> "Friends, what my mom and dad said is true. The bravery of humankind is beyond measure. You have helped me avenge the deaths of my parents, whose heads hang from the poles on the edge of this terrible place. I apologize for lying to you, but I knew I could not take on these murdering dragons and their henchmen by myself. You have done a good deed this day.
>
> "I ask you now to go one step further. When Forge and Glimmerfang fell, they fought three red dragons and one white. We saw the white and today we finished one of the reds. But two remain. We must destroy them and their followers. Please forgive me for my deception and help me finish my quest."

The PCs may be furious at being tricked and absolutely refuse to help Katelyn. If that is the case, so be it. Steelheart wanders away, looking for other heroes and the adventure ends. However, if the PCs have Marlaxit's orders and realize that there are just three days left before 19 Flamerule, they may quickly agree to help. On the 19th, two red dragons, two black dragons, and the cult members will return—probably far too many enemies for the PCs to handle. The orders also make clear that before their return, the cultists will be meeting with the Zhentarim to discuss an alliance that will crush Thar like a nut in a vise. When the PCs reason this out, Steelheart says, "We have to stop them somehow!" Nothing can change her mind. If necessary, she will attempt to stop the cult by herself, and fail in the attempt.

Traveling back to Glister for help will simply take too long. It is a good day's flight away (using the *flying*

carpet), and another two days from Glister to Sulasspryn (assuming that allies gained in Glister can fly). There is just not enough time, and even if the PCs seek Thusk's help, he won't be in his tower, ("He's out somewhere. He didn't say where he was going or when he would return, and I never ask him," says Menzel.)

On the other hand, the negotiations are being held just one day's flight from Moortown. Flying PCs could reach it by the time the negotiations begin. Of course, this means facing all the dragons, the cult members, and the Zhentarim.

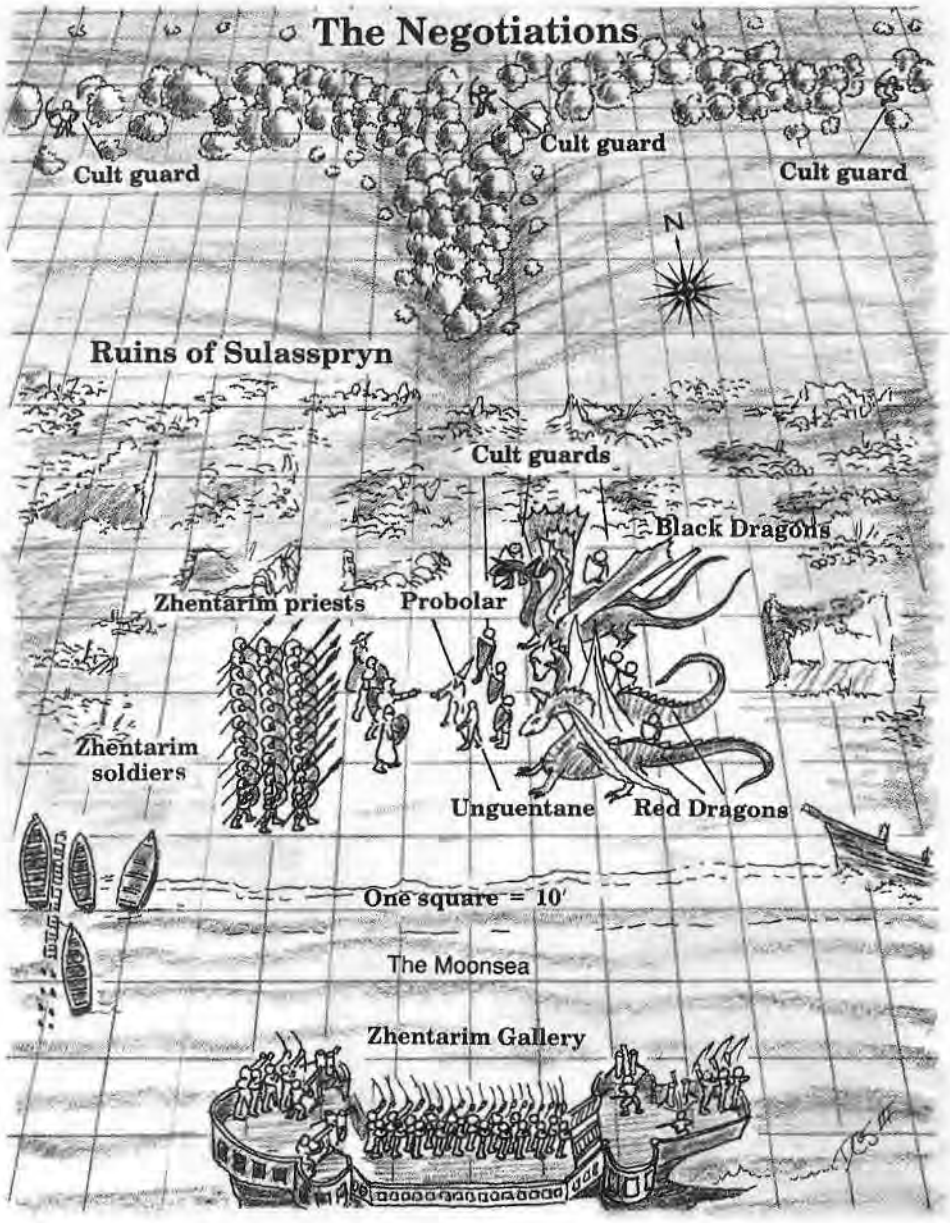
Hopefully, the PCs will notice the thread of thought in Marlaxit's orders that indicates the Cult's innate distrust of the Zhentarim. Perhaps they can use that distrust to derail the negotiations. Realistically, this is best hope of stopping the invasion.

The Negotiations

The trip from the ruins of Moortown to Sulasspryn should be uneventful. Few flying creatures will bother a *flying carpet* full of PCs armed to the teeth and accompanied by a 34'-long steel dragon. Steelheart can carry three additional PCs on her back if the *carpet* is full. If the PCs do not have flying magic available and did not find the carpet on the first look, let Steelheart encourage the PCs to scour the ruined town for anything that can get the entire party there quickly. Soon the PCs are crossing the southern mountain range and heading for the coast.

When they get within five miles of the Moonsea, Steelheart recommends that they fly with the sun at their backs and swoop down on the Cult and Zhentarim, taking them by surprise. Smart PCs will refuse to do so and insist that the area be scouted first (since the Cult had sentries in Moortown and is likely to have some posted around Sulasspryn).

Any PC reconnaissance proves to be a smart move, because three cult sentries are posted close to the meeting place (see map on this page). The sentries are best bypassed or dispatched by stealthy PCs, because each of the guards carries a shrill whistle. If a guard blows an alarm, the cult members and dragons on the beach have a 50% chance of hearing it. Two black dragons, each carrying two cult members, will come to investigate. If PCs were paying attention in



Moortown, they will be aware of the danger of the cult's signal whistles by now and will take steps to negate them; if not, the DM should decide whether the dragons and scouts find the PCs. The sentries are looking for an approach on foot and may miss flying PCs, so adventurers who prepare an airborne assault, and then want to back off once they see the horde awaiting them, should be allowed to do so.

Cult sentries (3): AL LE; AC 4; MV 12; F3; hp 26, 24 (×2); THAC0 18; #AT 3/2 with long sword; Dmg by weapon type; SA specialized with long sword; S 16 (+1 damage); SZ M; XP 175; long sword, short composite bow, 20 sheaf arrows, dagger. None of the sentries have treasure, but each has a silvered signal whistle worth 5 gp.

As the PCs reach the bluffs overlooking the Dragon Reach, they see the following:

> Below you is the ruined city of Sulasspryn, an ancient seaport. It was prosperous at one time but now only the vacant walls of buildings and rubble remain, obviously the result of war or

some other catastrophe. Perhaps a great wave overwhelmed the city; a half-sunken shipwreck lies stranded on the shore of the Moonsea.

The message you discovered in Moortown didn't lead you astray. On the beach sit four large dragons, two black and two red. Next to them stand several members of the Cult of the Dragon, obvious in their scaly armor and trappings. One bears a standard depicting a crown in the grasp of a dragon's claw. Approaching from the distance is a large triple-oared galley that seems filled with soldiers in dark armor. You can just make out that the galley is armed with a ballista, catapults, and other engines of war. Proudly flying from a mast is a large flag bearing a skull surrounded by a dark sun, the emblem of Cyric, god of death—murder, and lies.

When the ship gets within 100 yards of shore, it stops, drops anchor, and launches four longboats filled with Zhentarim in black armor.

From the 200′ high bluffs, the PCs can see everything, but cannot hear the negotiations that take place below. A wooded ravine goes down the bluffs, and cautious PCs can make their way down it concealed from view, sneak through town, and get within earshot without much difficulty. (See "The Negotiations" map.)

When they hear the negotiations, the PCs can extend their fiendish creativity to create a plan to deal with the two evil groups; give the players time to argue the merits of various schemes. Making an outright attack against the Zhentarim and the Cult is almost certain suicide: the dragons will breath fire and acid, the Zhentarium clerics and Cult mages will blast away with spells, and evil soldiers of both groups will charge the PCs fanatically. Against such odds, the PCs should flee as quickly as they can. Worse, the almost certain defeat of PCs who remain to fight will bind the two distrustful evil factions together against a common enemy—they quickly reach an agreement on their alliance. Two months later Thar falls against their combined assault.

A far better approach is for the PCs to foul up the negotiations so thoroughly that they goad the Zhentarim, Cultists, and dragons into fighting each other. There are dozens of ways to do this, but here are several possibilities:

1. A mage PC casts *ventriloquism*, and has some fun. For instance, a mage could make it seem as if one of the Zhentarium soldiers is saying, "By Cyric's eyes, these are the ugliest serpents I've ever seen! And they smell bad, too! How can you stand them?" A cult leader demands an immediate apology, and the dragons hiss angrily.

A Zhentarim leader quickly responds, barking, "You there, shut up, or I'll feed you to one of these dragons! We are here to become allies, not insult each other!"

At this point the mage's *ventriloquism* continues the leader's speech, injecting, "Besides, in a real fight these dragons can't fight anyway." A quick-thinking mage could keep escalating the insults until both sides come to blows.

2. An *invisible* PC sneaks down among the Zhentarim or the Cult and does something similar, although this is very risky since the dragons can detect *invisible* beings (see *MM*, page 63.)

3. A PC can cast *change self* or *polymorph self* to make himself look like a Zhentarim or Cult member, then insult the other side himself. If PCs disposed of cult guards and have their outfits, they could also apply the disguise nonweapon proficiency. Or they can suggest to Steelheart that she assume the form of one of the faction members and foul things up.

4. The PCs could swim out to the ship *invisibly*, sneak on board, and fire a ballista at the dragons, shouting, "Now, followers of Cyric! Fall upon the disbelievers! Slay them all!" The cult high leader would quickly yell, "Treachery! Destroy these backstabbers!"

5. A PC mage could cast a *stinking cloud* on the dragons while Steelheart transforms into a cult guard, screaming, "We are betrayed! There is a Zhentarim mage on the ship casting spells!"

6. If he can get close enough, a PC mage with a *message* spell could send a whispery message to one of the dragons, such as "I am the avatar of Tiamat, dragon goddess. Hear me and obey! Waste no more time with these worthless Zhentarim. They are tricking your human companions; they want to take your gold and eat your young! Destroy them now!" If accompanied by a *phantasmal force* of a glowering, wispy image of Tiamat's heads, this could provoke an attack by the dragon on the Zhentarim, who will scream treachery and counterattack.

PCs who don't devise a way to set the two sides against each other will be urged to do something by Steelheart. If they ask her for advice against such overwhelming odds, Steelheart says, "Well, you are the heroes, not me! You're experienced! Sure, attacking is suicide, but there must be something we can do to stop this alliance! Think of something! Think of all the people in Thar who will die if we don't stop this!"

Katelyn also recognizes the two reds and whispers to the PCs: "That's them! The ones that killed my mom and dad! No matter what, we can't let those two escape!" Her gaze as she watches the reds is determined and merciless.

Once the Cult and the Zhentarim start to fight, the DM may wish to avoid rolling dice for the combat and describe the fight. The dragons' awesome breath weapons win the day after several rounds, leaving the Zhentarim dead and their ship in flames. If the players want to fight it out, however, hand out copies of the sidebar notes on the two factions. Let half the players run the Cult and let the other half run the Zhentarim and their ship. The players may want their PCs to participate surreptitiously in the fight. In any case, if it appears that either of the reds will survive, Katelyn assumes her true form, flies down, and uses her breath weapon. It might turn out that Katelyn does not survive her bold attempt to avenge her parents, or she might simply drag an uninvolved group of PCs in from the sidelines.

A truly remarkable ending is possible if the PCs allow survivors to leave, because the survivors will report that they were betrayed by their allies. It will be a cold day in the Abyss before the Zhentarim and the Cult of the Dragon have anything to do with each other again. Even if there are no survivors, Cult and Zhentarim agents who investigate are sure that some treachery went wrong. Though they won't know the details, their suspicions of their partners will put the entire project on hold, perhaps indefinitely. Thar will be safe because neither side feels strong enough to invade by itself.

One day after the battle, two red and three green dragons will arrive, each carrying a cult member. The cult leader used his *ring of dragons* to summon aid during the battle, but his minions have arrived too late to help.